

# Creative Partnerships: *What can we learn from ArtPlay?*

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# Mapping Engagement at ArtPlay

Australian Research Council Linkage Project

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The University of Melbourne  
&  
*ArtPlay*, The City of Melbourne

with support from the Australia Council



## Project Team

- Professor John O'Toole and  
Dr Neryl Jeanneret – Chief Investigators
- Robert Brown – Project Manager
- Simon Spain - *ArtPlay* Creative Producer
- Celia Anderson – Doctoral Scholar

## What is ArtPlay?

- *ArtPlay* represents the first permanent home for children's art and play in Australia. It was modelled on Dublin's innovative arts-based Play centre, *The Ark*, which was in turn founded on the principle "that children, as citizens, have cultural entitlements equal to that of any adult" (The Ark, 2006)
- Open to children aged 3-13 years the facility serves a broad community including, parents, carers, artists and teachers and runs diverse workshops, across all art forms, combining active play and art-making







## Why Research ArtPlay?

- A unique purpose-built multi-arts and play environment in a period of formative development
- *ArtPlay* makes an important contribution to the artistic, creative and cultural development of the City of Melbourne as a child-friendly city (MCC 2005b) and contributes to the city's Strategic Plan and the Arts and Cultural Strategy (2004-2007)
- A significant site to research the indicators of sustainable effects of innovative community arts programs involving children, parents, artists and teachers
- A commitment to research by *ArtPlay* and The City of Melbourne

## Key Research Questions

- *What engages children in artist-led art and play programs and why?*
- *What, if any, learning outcomes are evident in such programs?*
- *What if any, transformative outcomes relating to cultural citizenship are evident in such programs?*



# Literature Review

- Early years art and play
- Artist/teacher pedagogy
- Child engagement
- Learning outcomes (extrinsic & intrinsic)
- Creative partnerships
- Cultural citizenship
- Learning environment

*(Catterall 2002, Deasy 2002, Brice Heath & Roach 1999, Costantoura 2001, Myers 2003, van Bakelen 1997, Trowsdale 1996, Hunter 2005, O'Toole, 2007, Chapman, 2003).*

## Research Methods

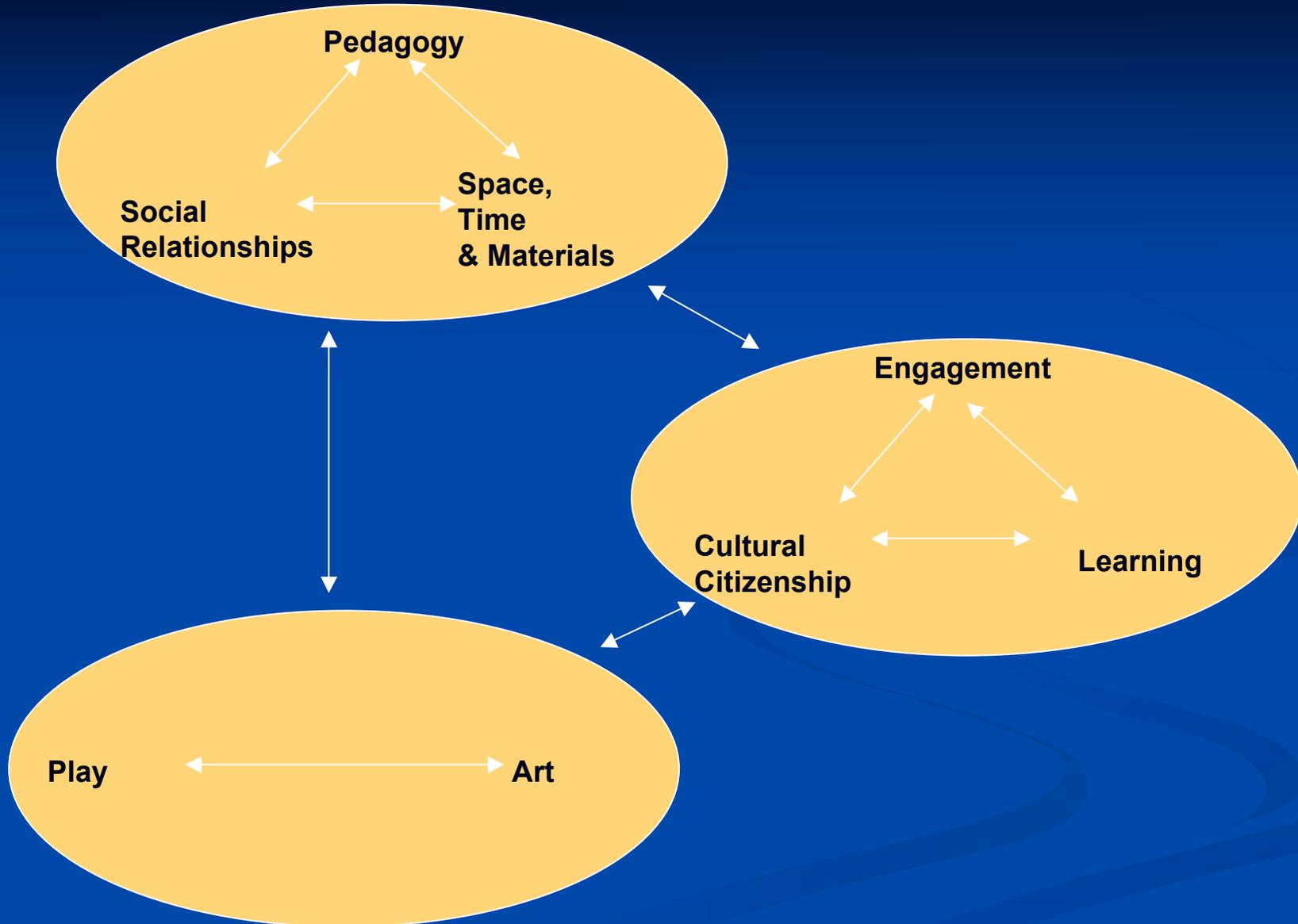
- Investigating multiple points of view including those of children, parents, artists, teachers, *ArtPlay* staff and policy makers
- Year 1: Ethnographic case studies of selected programs and key participants
- Years 2 and 3: Action research - aiming to inform, improve and change practice. A cycle of planning, action, observation, reflection and evaluation and re-planning

## Systems Study

- *ArtPlay* management and staff
- *ArtPlay* advisory committees
- *ArtPlay* grants committee
- Key stakeholders and partners
  - City of Melbourne
  - Australia Council
  - Myer Foundation
  - Schools
  - Arts Victoria
  - Craft Victoria
  - Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

## *ArtPlay* Program Dimensions

Users:	Duration:	Type of Workshop	Artforms	Age groups:
Artists	One-off	Booked (holiday)	Music	Three-Five
Children	Short-term (2-3 sessions)	School and Preschool	Visual Arts	Five - Nine
Parents/ Carers	Long-term	Festival	Drama, Puppetry and Theatre	Nine - Thirteen
Teachers		Drop-in	Dance	
<i>ArtPlay</i> Staff		Outreach program	Other	



# Creative Partnerships:

Connecting with schools and early learning centres

- Rajasthani Potters

*(City of Melbourne ArtPlay Grant)*

- Accessories

*(South Kids project)*

- Coming Closer: Responding to Indigenous Stories

*(City of Melbourne ArtPlay Grant)*

# Rajasthani Potters





.. just observing that these men dress differently and speak a different language. You know there's a communication happening and I think that's what interests me. What I like is the personal experience the children can have with the potter, and I think that makes it memorable. **Facilitator**



**The pottery that the children have done today, has been printed in their minds and they'll take it back with them. It's a different feeling when someone comes eight thousand kilometers from India to Australia and treats them (children) like a family. Artist**



**The children live in high-rise, they don't have gardens and they're used to watching and observing rather than actually getting out and doing. So, I would say that they have had a really meaningful tactile experience today. Teacher**





**Many of their parents don't venture outside of their community group, their cultural group. These children are the next generation who are going to have to meet people from a lot of different cultures. Australia is much more cosmopolitan now. Teacher**

**They very rarely come to the city, some of these kids. And yet, they live a 45 minute walk from the city. Teacher**





# Accessories



**South Kids**

**‘Personalised Learning’: Reflecting on identity through reference to artists from different cultures.**





From the beginning it was our intent to share the process of making things rather than focusing on what we create. The process is about discussing, planning, sketching and collaborating. **Artist**



Ricardo's passion for what he does is the key. **Teacher**





ArtPlay is very multicultural. I learnt more about being in a team and how to make things fun and in an arty way. Student



It's risky, it's really free. ArtPlay is letting us go with our ideas. Everything can be changed if you ask the children, 'What is your solution as a designer?'

Ricardo - Artist

I think it's the best one (ArtPlay workshop) we've done. I really like Ricardo and Claudio. They're very supportive and gave you lots of advice. I learnt how to relate things to each other. I like doing the designing the best - creating using the materials. They never say they don't like what you are doing. They always keep giving advice to make it better and stuff instead of giving you a whole different idea. **Student**

The train traveling is good because it teaches us that you have to be on time or you will miss it. **Student**

# Coming Closer: Responding to Indigenous Stories









I don't want him to run around with the Aboriginal flag. I want him to see himself more in the country and feel like he belongs. Boori Pryor



## What can we learn from *ArtPlay*?

- Developing a creative model of arts practice
- Experiencing rather than ‘teaching’ culture
- Investigating productive pedagogies (artists, teachers, facilitators and parent/carers)
- Building a creative community centred on children
- Researching and advocating for children
- Creating a culture of reflective practice
- Creating and sustaining partnerships

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