

The significance of material handling in Art and Education

Through hands-on art, this research seeks to develop personal and cultural connections. When engaging with digital learning, only our senses of sight and sound and a limited sense of touch and bodily movement are used. The speed of interaction and high-resolution images satisfies our immediate need for entertainment, but without connecting to the information with all our senses, we rarely achieve deep and rich engagement. When the participant handles materials, the sensory process provides more insight, as if the material magically “speaks”, producing deep engagement and empowering imagination and creativity.

Abstract

Within today’s digital “hands-free” society, people seem to have lost touch with physically creative activities as, when engaging with digital learning, only our senses of sight and sound and a limited sense of touch and bodily movement are used. There needs to be a greater understanding of the benefits of engagement through the sensory experience of material handling because without connecting to the information with all of our senses, we rarely achieve deep and rich engagement. This participatory action-led research seeks to develop personal and cultural connections through “hands-on” art. Using qualitative and practice-led research methods in her own contemporary fresco art painting Anne-Marie initiated workshops and interviews with adult participants in the Northern Territory who engaged in a rich learning space including mindfulness and material-handling. The research concludes that by entering into a “state of flow” as a planned condition, a participant is fully engaged in the practice. It is suggested that when this engagement happens the process of material handling can be described as significant; as a material task can be carefully planned and detailed, giving respect to cultural traditions of hands-on tactile learning and their benefits within a teaching curriculum or a community workshop activity.