



*The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance guiding board is delighted to present the NAREA logo in this issue of Innovations, the official publication of NAREA. Selecting the logo was a difficult and exciting process, grounded in our overarching goals to include our membership in meaningful ways. As we solicited a logo design, we reached out to members, seeking their collaboration and inviting them to share their creativity by contributing a logo design for this newly formed organization. In the notice, we explained that the logo should create a visual identity for NAREA and should be easily reproducible for a variety of purposes. We want to thank those who submitted logo designs for consideration. The interest among our membership in this project symbolizes the great desire among all of us to create an identity for the organization that will represent our vision and our work together.*

*Zvia Dover, graphic designer, early childhood educator, mother of two young children and*

*NAREA member from South Florida, offered a logo design that inspired great interest among the NAREA board at its February 2003 meeting in San Francisco. Zvia included with the logo, a compelling series of figures and explanation of her thinking behind the design. The words, ideas and considerations that you will see in Zvia's article embodied a thoughtfulness and deep connection to the philosophy underlying NAREA and its approach to communication and collaboration within North America and with colleagues in Reggio Emilia.*

*Zvia has further contributed her design work to the new membership brochure that will be in the hands of many members and potential members during upcoming meetings and conferences this summer and fall. As we celebrate the launching of NAREA's new logo, please invite others to join us in building a diverse community of advocates and educators to promote and defend the rights of children, families and teachers.*

*-Lori Geismar-Ryan*

*Clayton Schools' Family Center, Clayton, Missouri  
NAREA Guiding Board/Innovations Editorial Board*





# WHEN PEDAGOGY AND DESIGN INTERTWINE: *The Story Behind the NAREA Logo*

By Zvia Dover

Listening to the NAREA presentation at the NAEYC conference in New York City last November, I made a promise to share my vision of the organization's image. With a background in graphic design as well as in early childhood education, a determination surfaced to synchronize the two components into a visual statement that would be presented to NAREA's board members for consideration as a logo for this exciting new organization.

Paying close attention to NAREA's mission and goals, I committed to focus on infusing thoughts into shapes and safeguarding the principles that NAREA advocates, while trying to offer a timeless look. Additionally, I made a decision to critically consider every element in the design, as it would stand to represent ideas, concepts and philosophies. No coincidences, caprices nor personal likes and dislikes have residency in a future logo. When reflecting on the role of education in the field of architectural design, Mies van der Rohe expresses the following: "Training has a practical purpose in view, but education has values. It is the business of education to implant insight and responsibility. It must turn irresponsible opinion into responsible judgment and lead from chance and arbitrariness to the rational lucidity of an intellectual order" (Blaser, 1994, p. 51). Thus, acting responsibly would mean that choices regarding the elements of the future symbol must be intellectually and consciously driven, encompassing uncompromising statements.

A graphic designer's role is to communicate while finding solutions to problems. As such, I had the obligation to visually express the essence of NAREA using a graphic thesaurus, which encompasses synonyms, metaphors, coding and similar components found in a verbal/written language. Reggio educators provide us with opportunities to examine how powerful (as well as natural) it is for children to express themselves in means other than the common lan-

guage we verbalize, read and write: "The use of graphic expression comes from the need to bring clarity . . . as they construct their ideas, they also construct the symbols and the plurality of codes.

Therefore, when they draw, they are not only making a graphic intervention, but they are selecting ideas and getting rid of excessive, superfluous or misleading ones" (Malaguzzi, 1998, p.92). While visiting the infant-toddler centers and preschools in Reggio Emilia, it was not surprising to learn that several *atelieristi* have a background in graphic design. This makes sense, considering the graphical thinking designers possess can support children as they venture into transforming words, concepts, feelings and thoughts into images. Consistent with the Reggio community's practice of constantly asking "why," every element (lines, shapes or signs) that is put on paper (or the computer screen) must have justification. As expected, many ideas were scribbled during the two-month dialogue between the future logo and myself. The final logo design represents my interpretation of NAREA concepts into graphics.

A circle was chosen as the starting form in constructing the pieces for NAREA's visual, as it represents a shape that is a whole, like our planet. A "whole" does not mean something that is perfect, but rather a body that encompasses numerous components that complement and build upon each other. It is one out of three basic shapes in the design world. However, unlike its two other shape mates (triangle and square), it has no end because it has no starting point . . . a suitable symbol representing a continuous cycle. It epitomizes a dynamic, energetic as well as vigorous and forceful form as it rolls towards discoveries, progress and change. Although it is not obviously identified in the final look of the symbol, it is the seed from which the 'A' and 'R' are developed (Fig. 1). Suggesting an image rather than directly depicting it is an intriguing approach in keeping any design meaningful and worthy of discussion. Similarly, NAREA

presents itself as a compilation of individuals who network as a whole, sharing common visions and goals.

Once I made the decision to modify a circle and use it as the seed for the components of the logo, a deliberate and consequential judgment followed. If the 'A' and 'R' rise from the circle, then the other forms must be equally (visually) acknowledged. While a circle is altered to construct the 'A' and the 'R', it serves as a testimony for two bodies who collaborate and share a

core: 'A' (for American advocates) and 'R' (for Reggio Emilia counterparts), and both are equally important in their contribution to the organization. Our Italian colleagues have chosen to share their philosophy and their experience with us and, through this dialogue, American educators have committed themselves to understand and consider their own values and experiences working with children, teachers and families in their own communities. Therefore, because all bodies are equal, graphically articulating them means that all of the elements ('N', 'A', 'R', 'E', 'A') must share common visual attributes. All pieces of the design must possess the same thickness, endpoints and size, as no hierarchy is present. Moreover, rounded corners are applied to each end, emphasizing the circle's concept of a whole. These round edges provide a non-threatening look, as they replace sharp angles, twists and turns, inviting smooth flow from one form to the next (Fig. 2). With NAREA's goal to encourage diversity of membership, it is imperative to give voice (or in this case, to give shape) to the concept of inclusion of a diversified audience. Here, this representation translates itself in the form of combining upper case and lower case letters (Fig. 3), while still maintaining the integrity of equality. In contrast to common written language, where capital letters are taller than lower case, all of the logo letters share common ground line and sky line, as they are all the same height; none is taller than the other.

Within the bodies that make NAREA, the 'R' and 'E' are connected, as they stand to represent one consolidated entity, with a specific geographical location. The back vertical line of the 'E' is omitted to convey the idea of an open and welcoming body (Fig. 4), where ideas can flow back and forth, with no walls as boundaries. Moreover, it requires some effort to identify the 'R' as an 'R'. Although it is graphically possible to make the 'R' more visible, this deliberate action (provocation) of connecting the two while "camouflaging" one, is a constant reminder for us to always look deeper, far and beyond what appears effortlessly on the surface. On the other hand, North America within

NAREA's map stands for the United States, Canada and Mexico. Therefore, the 'N' and 'A' are not visually joined, as each country is

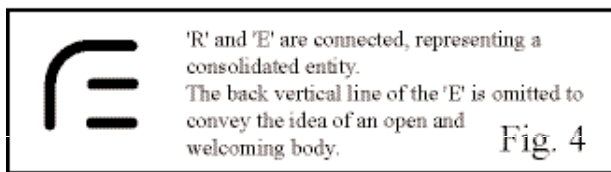
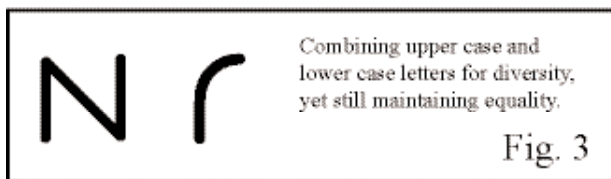
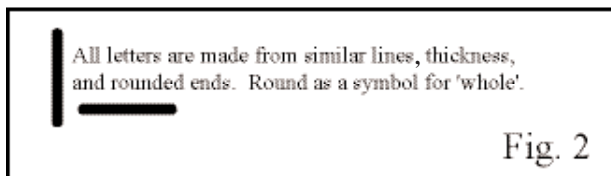
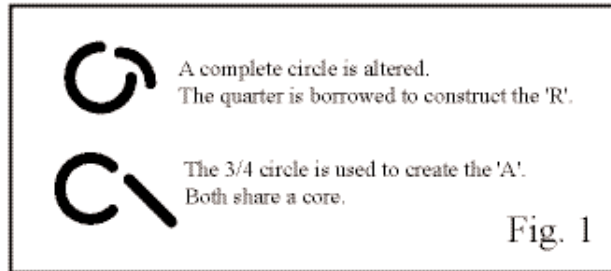


Fig. 5  
Michelangelo:  
Creation of Adam,  
The ceiling of the  
Sistine Chapel,  
Vatican, Rome



geographically, politically, culturally and socially distinguished from the others, and each constructs its own identity, even within itself. Graphically, letters have a front and a back, and with NAREA's goal to serve as a conduit for collaboration and dialogue, the 'A' that represents the alliance, is vertically flipped so it faces the fronts of all others in their stride forward. Juxtaposing that last 'A' in this stance visually narrates the concept of communicating ideas back and forth, rendering a reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, it is this 'A' (of the "alliance") that is graphically connected to the last member of the logo: the 'E', symbolizing power to energize the structure. It is inspired by Michelangelo's depiction of the Creation of Adam, where an act of invigorating life into a being is so powerfully rendered in a fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome (Fig. 5). The union between the Americans and Italians is the source of energy that infuses life into this organization.

With the link of the last piece of the logo to the other, it is imperative to return to the starting point of a set of people joining efforts, intentions and resources to improve or recreate a meaningful whole. It is their commitment and vision that should be graphically acknowledged. Therefore, two circles (eyes) are observing, evaluating and constantly on alert, safeguarding the journey of NAREA in the quest for excellence. Additionally, a straightforward, no-nonsense, block of type is positioned directly under the symbol, simply stating the full name of the organization, locking it between ground and skylines, which are visible to complete the composition.

Unlike the Sistine Chapel's rich use of color, the logo's clean look is in agreement with the approach of "less is more," which was first introduced by the Swiss

architect Mies van der Rohe (Blaser, 1994), who believed the beauty of structures is found in their simplicity. The colors of the NAREA design were carefully chosen. Throughout history, artists communicated with colors to convey emotions, concepts and meaning. For example, red is associated with being provocative and exciting; blue is considered to be dependable, as it is a reminder of the sky and water, two constant elements that have been and will be here forever. Consequently, many financial institutions such as banks and mortgage companies use blue as the primary element in their logo. For the NAREA letters, a 50% black that is a mid-tone gray was chosen, as it is a color with no pretensions. It is modest, well balanced and achieved by the collaboration of two distinct and dominant colors (black and white). To provide a meaningful contrast, a vital orange is applied to the two circles (eyes) and the block of type. This color is considered the friendly color, one that is inviting. Orange is identified as being energetic, dynamic and innovative. Hence, the two colors accurately represent NAREA's spirit, as they are intertwined with the design elements that are discussed above, presenting a visually pleasing, coherent statement.

Although an intriguing design project such as this one desires to be infinite, reality dictates otherwise. Concessions must be made and judgments must take place. Assessing the solutions of the interpretations, the NAREA logo holds a potential to smoothly be integrated into a comprehensive visual identity system, in order to promote a unified look in a larger plan for NAREA. As an educator, I am excited to be part of such an organization, and as a graphic designer, I am happy I had the opportunity to offer my perspective for NAREA's image.

### References

Blaser, W. 1994. Mies van der Rohe: The art of structure. New York: Whitney Library of Design, an imprint of Watson-Guption Publications.

Malaguzzi, L. 1998. History, ideas, and basic philosophy. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, G. Forman (Eds.), The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach - Advanced reflections. Greenwich, CT: Ablex.