

Mosaic of Marks Exhibit: Final Report

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Introduction

In April of 2020, a dream became a proposal.

The Vancouver Reggio Association directors worked passionately to bring the Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials Exhibition and Atelier to our communities of children, parents and educators in Vancouver. A wonderful collaboration formed with the **Italian Cultural Centre**, who provided the venue, **Bowen Island Children's Society**, who, together with **Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre** assisted with government grants for early childhood educators, and with the many **volunteers and family members** who supported us on this journey.

Planning and Preparation

The Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and Atelier took place from October 1 to January 15, 2023, located at Il Museo in the Italian Cultural Center. This beautiful venue was gifted to the Vancouver Reggio Association for the duration of the exhibit by the Italian Cultural Center (ICC), which is an organization committed to supporting Italian events throughout Vancouver. The location was nothing but excellent as it is central, conveniently located a few blocks away from the main BC highway, provides free parking, and is easily accessible by transit, being located a 5 minute walk from Renfrew skytrain station.

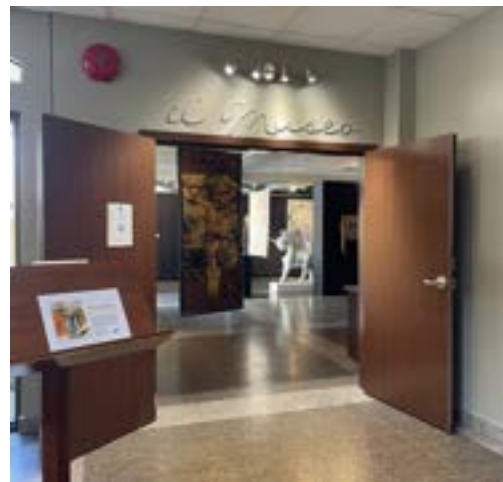


With a mission to promote and share Italian culture, values and heritage with all communities and through a collective love of art, food, wine, design, film, music and literature, the Italian Cultural Centre proudly shares its culture with the community, and welcomes all who wish to be part of this vibrant destination in

Vancouver.

<https://italianculturalcentre.ca/events/>

The ICC offered a wide selection of rooms accommodating the exhibit; from *Il Museo* to the Grand Ballroom where we welcomed our guests for the opening ceremony and the first day of the NAREA Conference to the Osteria Bar and the Trattoria Hall where multiple professional development opportunities were held.



There is an Italian language immersion Reggio-inspired preschool located in the ICC, *Scuola d'Infanzia L'Arbero Magico*, which is a program for children ages 3 to 5. The connection between early childhood education and this particular exhibit was strong, with children and families from the preschool visiting the exhibit and atelier often. ICC educators were gifted a certain number of tickets to the fall conference in reciprocity.

We feel confident that we created an intimate, intuitive space that led the visitor through an educational journey. Il Museo provided an intimate, dedicated space for the Exhibit, where the documentation panels and the interactive atelier are in close proximity. The display walls for the panels of the exhibit were dark, which in turn created an undertone of calmness and quietness which allowed for the voices of children to echo in the space as videos were played on a loop.

Timelines for the exhibit

We organized ourselves in committee and subcommittees and started with a timeline for hosting the exhibit. What started with a few dates developed into a complex, interconnected set of dates, tasks, challenges, and successes.



Exhibit Installation

Installation of the exhibit was a family affair. On September 30th, board members, their partners, and children showed up ready to work. The exhibit had been unpacked the day before.

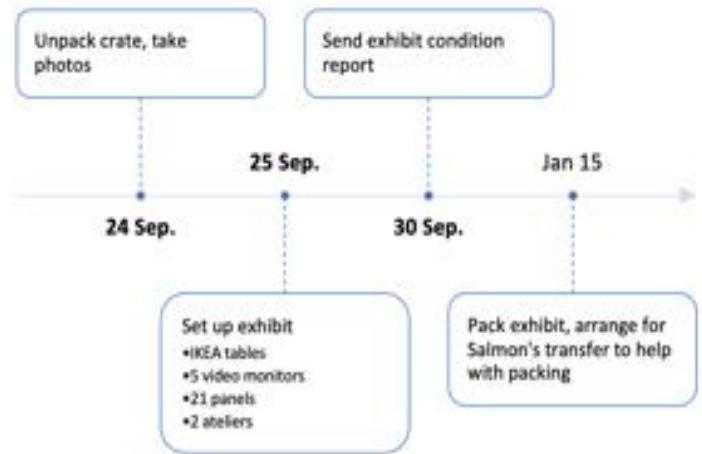
The exhibit had arrived unharmed and was received and delivered to the ICC by Salmon's Transfer (a moving and storage company). The installation guide was excellent and for the most part easy to follow. We had procured through purchase and donation a variety of tables and chairs for the atelier experiences. Three of the board members' partners are tradesmen by profession and provided a lot of assistance in mounting the panels professionally, efficiently, and securely.

Overall, the installation took about 5 hours (not including unpacking).





The installation committee created a clear outline for their work:



And just like that, by 4:00 pm on September 30th, Il Museo was home to the Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials Exhibit and Atelier.

Opening Ceremony

In collaboration with the Italian Cultural Centre, the Reception Committee invited children, families, educators and other members of the community at large to an evening celebrating the opening night for the Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials, Exhibition and Atelier. The Consul General for the Republic of Italy was in attendance as an honoured guest.



On Friday, October 14, we would be so delighted to have your company at the dual opening of Mosaic of Marks Words Material Exhibition and Atelier* from Reggio Emilia, and L'Albero Magico (Scuola D'Infanzia).

The *Mosaic of Marks* exhibition acclaims the wonderful work of the children and educators from Reggio Emilia, Italy.

L'Albero Magico is the newly established, Reggio Emilia-inspired school for young children at the Italian Cultural Centre.

The exhibition will be in *Il Museo*, located at the Italian Cultural Centre, 3075 Slocan Street, Vancouver. We will begin in the ballroom on-site with welcoming comments. A ribbon cutting will take place at 6:30 pm, followed by a "come and go" reception with aperitivi (appetizers and drinks) until 8pm. Festive dress welcome!

For catering purposes, we ask you to RSVP by October 7 at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yxqpyw66>

Reception hosted by the Vancouver Reggio Association and L'Albero Magico.

*the exhibition will be open to the public from October 4



The event was attended by more than 200 guests, connecting over wine, food, and great conversations. And, of course, the ribbon was cut by the children present.



Welcoming Max Ghirardi and Mirella Ruozzi

With much excitement and joy, on October 18th 2022, we welcomed Max and Mirella to our community in Vancouver. We wanted to share a bit of who we are, our home, and how wonderful it was to be in community together. We started with a visit to il Museo, a drive through Stanley Park, a moment on the beautiful west coast of Vancouver, and good food.



The exhibit

Mosaic of Marks, Words, Materials Exhibition and Atelier at the Italian Conference Centre, Vancouver

October 1 2022 – January 15 2023

In the days leading to the NAREA Conference, the atelier committee (comprised of several VRA board members, Maggie Chow from Chow Creative Studios, Judianne Grace from Capilano Children's Centre), Gabrielle Garcia (NAREA), guests from Peachtree in Atlanta, together with Reggio ateliereste Max Ghirardi and Mirella Ruoizzi, oversaw the installation, furnishing and administration of the atelier space. These interactive atelier spaces were nestled at the back of the exhibition space and in several other locations interspersed through the exhibit. Four large white IKEA tables joined together created a large canvas for collaboration, community, and learning.



Materials were sourced by donation, discount, wholesale purchase, thrifting, and in store purchase.

We offer thanks to:

Maggie Chow at Chow Creative Studios for the donation of her time and many materials;
Opus Art Supplies for their donation of paper and discount on other purchases;
Erin Boniferro at Collage Collage for sharing their wholesale discount code for the purchase of high quality art materials through their supplier.



Together with staff from NAREA, the atelier committee and several volunteers sat together for a working atelier session hosted by Max and Mirella.

We discussed the set up for the ateliers, selected materials, displayed tools and discussed intentions for the guided ateliers to take

place both during and after the NAREA Conference.

Listening to Max and Mirella sharing their thoughts and knowledge electrified our minds and hearts with energy from deep within.

Exhibit/Atelier Opening Hours

Tuesday-Saturday 9:30-5:30 - staffed by Il Museo staff

The atelier was open to the public and regularly restocked with mark making materials: tools and surfaces.

Following the NAREA Conference, it was decided to open the Exhibit on select Tuesday evenings from 5:30-8:30 - staffed by VRA Board Members. This decision allowed educators who worked during the day to visit after work hours. It also created an opportunity for hosting several professional learning events during this time, detailed in the professional development section.



The 3rd NAREA Fall Conference

October 20-22 2022

The theme of the NAREA Fall Conference, as chosen by the Vancouver Reggio Association was: POSSIBILITIES AND COMPLEXITIES: RECONNECTING, REIMAGINING, RELAUNCHING

This theme was chosen to embrace our current local context and the opportunities the NAREA Fall Conference and Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material exhibit offered our community. After almost three years of the Covid-19 pandemic, educators were (and are) looking for opportunities to reconnect with each other, with ideas, and with materials. The pandemic gave us the opportunity to pause, reflect, and reimagine what The Reggio Emilia Approach can offer children, families, and educators. It also seemed like a natural time to refresh and relaunch pedagogical practices that may have paused during the pandemic. Drawing upon Reggio Emilia Educational Project's principles such as the hundred languages, the image of the child, professional collaboration, and making learning visible, we suggested that the practice of progettazione addresses both hopeful possibilities for our context and the complexities of ongoing pandemic protocols and the diverse populations our community serves.

The Conference opened with an address from Larry Grant, Musqueam Elder. He shared his story and encouraged conference goers to learn who they were. His message was followed by lectures presented by Max Ghirardi and Mirella Ruozzi in conjunction with one small atelier session facilitated by NAREA staff. The second day of the Conference was hosted at the Simon Fraser University (SFU) campus in downtown Vancouver. This included lectures as well as 3 thematic ateliers facilitated by both NAREA staff and VRA local atelier group members.

The spaces for the ateliers was not large enough to accommodate all participants on either day and this caused some disappointment and distress.



A book sale was facilitated during the Conference where multiple Reggio Inspired books were presented and made available for order for the participants.

Gina Wong @gnwong · 4h
@VSB39 @vancouverreggio with #NAREA opens with greetings from Larry Grant, Musqueam elder. Honoured to hear his story & his encouragement to learn who we are and to love oneself. Primary caregiver in the early years are foundational in shaping the well being of the young child.



Closing the Conference

The Conference wrapped up with a get together, sending all of us home with full hearts, inspired minds and hopeful for new possibilities. It was the rich sharing that is going to fuel us for the next coming months.

But really what happened was so much more:



we shared each other`s joy.

Interactive Conference Ateliers

NAREA and VRA directors supported three interactive ateliers during the Conference:

A Chromatic Atelier

A Black and White Palette Atelier

A Natural Materials Palette Atelier

The Ateliers were all at maximum capacity (about 20-30 participants)



Professional Development

The **Vancouver Reggio Association** *drafted* a professional learning plan in support of the NAREA Fall Conference and the Mosaic of Marks, Words, Material Exhibition and Atelier.

Professional Learning Opportunities:

Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)

Date: October 11

Attendance: 110

VRA directors and pedagogical leaders from Burnaby, Richmond, and Vancouver school districts hosted their Changing Results for Young Children (CRFYC) conference in the Trattoria in the Italian Cultural Centre. Part of their professional learning experience included a visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and Atelier and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier, facilitated by two of our VRA directors.



Seamless Transition to Kindergarten Meeting

October 26

Attendance: 15

VRA directors and atelier working group members from the Burnaby School District led a professional learning event at the ICC for educators in the Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2K). Part of their professional learning experience was a visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

Vancouver School Board teachers

October 28

Attendance: 15

VRA directors and atelier working group members facilitated a professional learning experience for VSB teachers alongside a visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

Vancouver Community College

November 1

Attendance: 34 students

VRA directors and atelier working group members organized a class lecture followed by a visit to the Mosaic of Marcks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.



Simon Fraser University

November 8

Attendance: 30 students

VRA directors hosted a group of students from SFU for a professional learning event followed by a visit to the Mosaic of Marcks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.



Langley educators

November 15

Attendance: 17

VRA directors hosted a group of educators from Langley for a professional learning event followed by a visit to the Mosaic of Marcks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

Bowen Island Educators

November 19

Attendance: 20

VRA directors hosted a group of educators from Bowen Island for a professional learning event followed by a visit to the Mosaic of Marcks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

The Narrative Dimension of Mark Making

November 24 and December 1

Attendance: 25

A 2-part professional development workshop with local artist and atelierista Dr. Sylvia Kind.



The narrative dimension of mark-making

Sylvia Kind

Thursday November 24, 7:00-9:00pm

Thursday December 1, 7:00-9:00 pm

In these workshops we will consider why we make marks, what's involved in mark-making, what marks do, and the ways narratives are formed in the making and responding to marks.

In preparation for our first meeting please gather a collection of found marks. Found marks are marks that you come across in your daily life, in your work with children, on walks, or encountered in various places. They do not need to be human made. Collect marks on paper, print as photographs, or collect in material form and bring these to the first event. Photos can be printed on regular computer paper and should be 5"x7" or larger.

The Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (ECPN)

December 2

Attendance: 40

A visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC Board of Directors)

December 3

Attendance: 25

VRA directors hosted the ECEBC Board of Directors and Staff for a visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

StrongStart BC meeting

December 16

Attendance: 5

VRA director and pedagogical leaders from New Westminster School District met in conversation; the event included a visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and Atelier and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier, facilitated by two of our VRA directors.



StrongStart Regional Conference – January 13

Attendance: 90

VRA directors and atelier working group members led a professional learning event at the ICC for Strong Start (infant, toddler and preschool age) educators from seven local school districts. Part of their professional learning experience was a visit to the Mosaic of Marks Exhibition and an opportunity to engage in an interactive atelier.

Engagement

Interactive Ateliers at Il Museo

The Vancouver Reggio Association atelier sub-committee collected, purchased, and curated a set of materials to use for facilitated interactive ateliers that took place within the exhibition-atelier space (Il Museo) on Tuesday evenings or Saturdays or other times arranged with VRA directors. A small fee was charged for the experience to cover the cost of consumable materials.

In total, six Interactive atelier sessions were offered to the public.



Classes of early childhood education students from Vancouver Community College, Langara College, Capilano University, Simon Fraser University and multiple other early childhood education programs participated in self guided visits at the Exhibit.

Children, families and community at the Exhibit

Children's visits and engagements with the interactive atelier materials - regular visits from the preschool groups of children from centers located near the Italian Cultural Centre.



Community Participation - Attendance

Oct 1st, 2022-January 15th, 2023

Throughout the hosting of the exhibit, we had approximately 2500 visitors to the exhibition.

Exhibit Attendance	
Regular visitors	2500
Conference Visitors	300
Facilitated Atelier experiences (total)	521

Professional Development

Title	Date	Attendance
Changing Possibilities for Young Children	October 11	110
Seamless transition to Kindergarten	October 26	15
Vancouver School Board teachers	October 28	16
Vancouver Community College	November 1	34
Simon Fraser University	November 8	30
Langley Educators	November 15	18
Strong Start Parents and Children	Nov 16	14
Bowen Island Educators	November 19	20
The Narrative Dimension of Mark Making	November 24 and December 1	25
The Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (ECPN)	December 2	40
The Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC)	December 3	25
Thunderbird School Age Group - teachers and children	Dec 7	16
StrongStart meeting	December 16	5
Reggio Study Group	Jan 10	60
StrongStart Regional Conference	January 13	90
Tuesdays Evenings	Oct 15-Dec 31	95

Closing the Exhibit

On January 15, VRA board members gathered for a last meeting at the Italian Cultural Centre. The day started with a board meeting followed by packing the exhibit back into the crater. Again, this was a family affair as we had the support of our families in completing this work.



Closing Thoughts

Final Reflections

Hosting the conference and ateliers was a significant amount of work for a volunteer board. We learned a lot about communication, event planning, budgeting and team work. We considered, if we were to host something like this again, hiring a consultant or event planner to take some of the load off the board, as nearly everyone also has full time jobs and other life responsibilities. We also reflected that planning, creating committees and delegating tasks up to a year in advance could have saved a lot of stress. The board that applied for this conference was a different board due to some turnover that brought it home and close to half of the board had no experience with hosting a conference, and that made things more difficult.

Grazie mille!

A thank you to the volunteers who supported and made possible that our community hosted the Mosaic of Marks Words Materials. It is not without your care that this would have been possible.