



## The wonder of Learning

**Exhibition in Williamsburg  
Northside School in Brooklyn -  
March 5th, 2015**

Meeting with Robin Koo, Studio  
Teacher Beginnings Nursery School  
and Program Director Teaching Be-  
yond the Square.

The 6th and 7th floor of the Williamsburg Northside School in Brooklyn became the stage for an exhibition about new educational techniques that are being used in preschools throughout Reggio Emilia, Italy. With this exhibition, educators hope to influence policy makers in the Brooklyn school district to take an interest into new teaching methods.

“The Wonder of Learning, can be a democratic piazza calling attention to the importance of education and schools as places for discussion and mutual exchange: a piazza for dialogue about our qualities and our limits, about what we are now and what we could become. The exhibition speaks to all those involved in schooling - teachers, pedagogues, psychologist, families, etc. - and to all members of the general public who believe that safeguarding educational processes and their evolution is of fundamental importance for society”.

<http://www.newyorkcitywol.org>

### Listening with our hands

The Natural Materials Atelier, located on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, is a pleasant space that radiates an almost serene atmosphere in which young children are engaged in discovering materials: wood, beach glass, pebbles, and shells, quietly and independently.



“You can listen to the sounds of materials”

### Choreography of a place

In the exhibition one of the videos shows children running around and physically enjoying a large space supported by columns. These images document a pro-

cess of discovery that results in a beautiful choreography that is entirely conceived and directed by the children themselves.

“It looks like a mess, but it isn’t, it is a drawing of how we dance”.

### **Skipping, running, sliding**

In another video children can be seen entering into a dialogue with the staircase in their building. They record the sounds of their feet and comment on how those stairs might feel when they skip, slide or stampede up and down them.

### **The 100 language of children**

*The Wonder of Learning* is based on the ideas of the Italian pedagogue Loris Malaguzzi. In his book *The 100 language of children*, he speaks of the importance of integrating utopia, dreams and childlike wishes into our everyday life.

“You can listen to the sound of a place, the trees tell us about the wind”

### **Learnings and outcomes**

#### **Involving all the senses**

A growing number of primary schools and teacher training programs in Flanders are investigating the possibilities of the Reggio Emilia approach in the education of young children. Many teachers and professors have visited seminars in one of the Centres in Reggio Emilia to explore the methodology hands on. Following suit the practice has also found its way into museum education: the M HKA in Antwerp as well as the ABC studios in Brussels attest to this.

#### **The child’s point of view**

Museum educators realise the importance of an environment that stimulates learning and a method that involves all the senses. More effort could be paid however to the child’s point of view. Many museums still place their displays too high for children to see. In some cases entering the museum building itself is an overwhelming experience. In the exhibition we saw beautiful examples of how to make use of space and sound, light and shadow, before turning to the objects themselves. In this process of discovery, respecting the child’s own pace is especially important.



### **Leaves, twigs, dirt and rocks**

A key element in the Reggio Emilia approach is the use of natural materials - from the park outside the school. Nature is the child's preferred place to encounter materials. Again the discovery is physical: with all of their body. This is a journey of transformation in which leaves, twigs, dirt and rocks gathered in the park are altered from their original form to reveal quantities, qualities, densities and variations of color - and in the end become paint.

[www.reggiochildrenfoundation.org](http://www.reggiochildrenfoundation.org)