

Who is Doing What

VWS Alumni Corner

Interview with Vanessa Vondruska
Class of 2002



VWS: Tell me about your work and education after graduating from the VWS. (post-secondary schooling, travel, work experience, family, etc...)

VV: After high school, I did my undergraduate degree at Simon Fraser University in psychology and philosophy. During my undergraduate studies, I began work as a substitute early childhood educator and then moved to a full-time position in out-of-school care after I completed my degree. For my master's thesis, with the School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC), Faculty of Human and Social Development, at the University of Victoria, I worked with two childcare centres on art projects that I facilitated with the children and educators. I used Deleuzian concepts together with feminist theories to think about the disciplining of bodies, and to decentre the human, through art in early childhood education. During my masters, I also got married to my wonderful and supportive partner, Ian Clark.

Following the completion of my master's, I worked on two projects with the Unit for Early Years Research and Development at the University of Victoria. As an atelierista* I attempted to bridge the practices of contemporary art, my own art, and early childhood education. In this work I collaborated with educators in centres across BC's lower mainland and Vancouver Island. During this time, I also worked as a sessional instructor for the Aboriginal Early Childcare Education Program, Native Education College, and the School of Child and Youth Care, Early Years Specialization, University of Victoria.

VWS: What kind of work/study are you involved in now?

VV: I am currently enrolled in the PhD program in SCYC, and work as a sessional instructor of early childhood studies. I also work as an atelierista with a SSHRC-funded project entitled "Encounters with Materials in Early Childhood Education." My research and presentations focus on social justice and art pedagogies within early childhood spaces. I have had the opportunity to travel to present my work to places like Morocco and go to conferences in places like New Orleans. I am also working on publishing within the field of early childhood art pedagogies that consider art practices for social justice.

VWS: What advice would you give to this year's graduates?

VV: You don't have to know exactly where you are going in life. Follow your passions and believe in your work, and you will find your way.

VWS: What are your fondest memories of your time at the VWS?

VV: I had such a great teacher in grade school - Mr. Nash. He brought a modern edge to Waldorf education, which I think was very important for me. I also really enjoyed having the same teacher for eight years of my life.

VWS: How did Waldorf education affect your life, and your choice of career?

VV: I think Waldorf helped me to take risks in my work and allowed me to write and express my ideas in ways I am not sure I would have had in public schooling. Although, I did have to work hard to do the more structured aspects of university schooling, I made it through anyways. I realized fast you couldn't argue yourself out of multiple-choice exam in University like you can in Waldorf.

Interview by Ronaye Ireland, for Development October 2013

**The atelierista, or studio teacher, has formal education in the arts, typically in the visual arts, and works collaboratively with other educators in infant-toddler centers and preschools to further the educational project and objectives of the school community. The atelier, like the classroom, also supports the process of documentation, of making the learning and relationships of children, teachers and parents visible.*