

Planting the Seed: Early Encounters with Art and Materials for Infants and Toddlers



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This article reports findings from a qualitative case study exploring visual arts pedagogy for infants and toddlers in four early childhood education settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Drawing on interviews, observations, and document analysis, the research examined how kaiako (teachers) designed and facilitated culturally responsive, intentional visual arts experiences. Findings highlight the importance of relational pedagogy, sustained engagement with rich materials, and teachers' views of infants and toddlers as capable, agentic learners. Teachers described their practice as a dynamic "dance" of stepping back to honour children's exploration and stepping forward to sensitively guide and extend. Organisational conditions, including leadership support and collaborative inquiry, were essential for embedding visual arts as a valued part of the curriculum. The study underscores the transformative potential of early visual arts experiences for fostering identity, wellbeing, and dispositions for learning and calls for strengthened guidance and professional development in this area.

Introduction

This article introduces initial findings from a current research project examining infants' and toddlers' experiences of visual arts material exploration in early childhood education (ECE) in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study investigates how encounters with visual arts materials shape children's participation, meaning-making, and sense of self from their earliest experiences in ECE. By focusing on effective pedagogical practice, this research seeks to illuminate how visual arts can be meaningfully integrated into infant and toddler programmes to support holistic development, cultural identity, and a sense of belonging. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) defines holistic development as encompassing "cognitive (hinengaro), physical (tinana), emotional (whatumanawa), spiritual (wairua), and social and cultural dimensions" (p. 19) and recognises these aspects are intrinsically intertwined.

Although there is growing recognition of infants and toddlers as capable, agentic learners, research on their engagement with

visual arts remains limited, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. Existing studies have largely focused on art museum contexts or informal parent-child interactions in community spaces (Danko-McGhee, 2023; Palmer et al., 2021). While these have offered insights into aesthetic experience and early meaning-making, there is less known about how visual arts are understood and enacted in ECE settings designed specifically for infants and toddlers.

Our earlier work identified significant gaps in kaiako (teacher) confidence and understanding around visual arts pedagogy in the early years. As a result, visual arts experiences for infants and toddlers were often underdeveloped, inconsistent, or missing altogether from daily programmes (Denee, 2024). This absence risks overlooking the potential of the arts to foster early communication, cultural connection, and a strong sense of self. When visual arts experiences are attuned to children's interests, cultural identities, and developmental needs, they can contribute powerfully to the construction of identity and community (Richards & Terreni, 2022; Wrightson & Heta-Lensen, 2013). In this study, we use the term "material exploration" to emphasise infants' and toddlers' sensory and process-based engagement with a wide range of visual arts materials. These early encounters are not focused on representation or end products, but rather on inquiry, experimentation, and relationship-building through materials.

In response, this study explores what effective, intentional visual arts pedagogy looks like for infants and toddlers in ECE settings. Through interviews, observations, and pedagogical documentation, we have examined how teachers design, interpret, and reflect on visual arts experiences with the youngest learners. Particular attention has been paid to the ways materials are offered, how children respond, and how documentation practices support reflection and planning. Ultimately, our research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of visual arts and material exploration and how these experiences can be integrated meaningfully into infant and toddler curricula. By illuminating the practices and thinking of kaiako in this space, we seek to support ongoing professional inquiry and offer new insights into the role of the arts in the lives of our youngest citizens.

What the Visual Arts Offer as a Unique Learning Domain

Visual arts material exploration offers infants and toddlers unique opportunities for embodied, sensory-rich learning that cannot be replicated in other domains. Far from being passive or decorative, the visual arts engage the youngest learners holistically—through observation, movement, and touch (Lewin-Benham, 2023; Danko-McGhee, 2023), while also supporting the emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of development described in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). Infants and toddlers explore the world not through abstract reasoning, but through their bodies. Their encounters with rich materials support sensory integration, proprioceptive awareness, and the development of fine motor skills (Lewin-Benham, 2023).

These interactions lay vital foundations for higher-order thinking, language, and planning by stimulating neural pathways during the brain's most formative years (Lewin-Benham, 2023). As movement and cognition occupy overlapping regions of the brain, material exploration supports not only physical development but also the ability to sequence actions, sustain focus, and develop dispositions such as perseverance and curiosity. Aesthetic, sensorial environments have also been linked to increased attention and inquiry-based learning (Danko-McGhee, 2023).

How Visual Arts Experiences Support Learning and Development

Engagement with visual arts in the infant and toddler years supports a wide range of learning and development. These experiences foster communication, collaboration, cultural identity, and physical coordination, all of which are central to early development. Infants and toddlers are learning to express their ideas and emotions through many different modes or “languages.” The visual arts offer a powerful communicative tool, particularly for children who are still developing verbal language. Exploring their thinking through mark-making, gesture, or manipulation of materials can help infants and toddlers externalise and share their ideas, while also supporting receptive and oral language development (Richards & Terreni, 2022; Visser, 2013). As Visser (2004) notes, even infants' earliest engagements with visual imagery are moments of visual literacy, which builds a foundation for symbolic thinking.

Visual arts experiences also promote investigation. As children test materials through trial and error, they explore cause and effect, patterns, and relationships, all key elements of early scientific thinking (Danko-McGhee, 2023; Richards & Terreni, 2022). These exploratory moments become collaborative opportunities when children engage in shared discovery, often communicating through gaze, gesture, or imitation before language emerges.

Engaging with visual arts also provides an environment for cultural expression, relationship and identity formation. Every culture holds rich visual traditions, and the visual arts offer an avenue for infants and toddlers to engage with and celebrate these (Heta-Lensen & Wrightson, 2019). Relational pedagogy recognises that children are born into connection and thrive through meaningful, reciprocal relationships—not only with adults, but with peers, environments, and materials (Cliffe & Solvason, 2023). Equally significant is the joy and meaning that creative experiences bring. For infants and toddlers, visual arts material exploration is not only a means of learning, it is a source of pleasure, relationships, and wellbeing.

Challenges and Tensions

Despite the rich learning potential of visual arts for infants and toddlers, significant challenges persist in practice. Our earlier research identified that kaiako can lack confidence and understanding regarding visual arts in the early years, often leading to limited or absent experiences (Denee, 2024). Participants in Denee's (2024) study frequently described visual arts with infants and toddlers as “tricky,” “challenging,” or “limited.” Some noted they did not maintain a dedicated art area for this age group, offering experiences only occasionally. One respondent explained that increasing toddler enrolment had shifted the team's focus “more toward other things such as safety and routines.”

When visual arts are deprioritised or infrequent, children may miss out on rich opportunities for cultural expression, sensory engagement, and communication (Denee, 2024). Such limited provision may reflect narrow views of very young children as primarily in need of care and protection, rather than as capable, agentic participants in their own learning. Cheeseman (2017) challenges these constructions, advocating for pedagogies that position infants as initiators and protagonists in their encounters with the world. While relational pedagogy and care are foundational to infant and toddler education (Cliffe & Solvason, 2023; Sandilands, 2016), overemphasis on protection, routines, or hands-off philosophies can unintentionally limit agency, creative exploration, and the development of working theories (Denee, 2024; Salamon & Harrison, 2015). Agency refers to the capacity of infants and toddlers to act purposefully, make choices, and influence their experiences and interactions in ways that reflect their intentions and developing identities (Hedges, 2021). Such engagements support the development of working theories, which are the evolving ideas and understandings that children develop as they make sense of their experiences, test possibilities, and explore personally meaningful questions and interests (Hedges, 2022).

Curriculum guidance may also contribute to this tension. *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) affirms that all children are “competent and confident learners and communicators” (p. 5), and encourages infants' and toddlers' engagement with the visual arts, including mark-making, symbolic awareness, and sensory-rich materials. Sensory-rich materials are those that deeply engage infants' and toddlers' senses, inviting exploration through touch, sight, movement, and sometimes sound or smell, for example, clay or natural materials (Lewin-Benham, 2023). These references, however, are largely framed through a materials-based, child-led lens. For instance, the curriculum states that “toddlers have opportunities for active exploration and creative expression with the support, but not the interference, of kaiako” (p. 48). While well-intentioned, this framing may inadvertently diminish the teacher's role, casting kaiako as passive supporters rather than active co-constructors of learning. Without clearer guidance on the intentional, relational, and interpretive dimensions of visual arts pedagogy, kaiako may lack the confidence or clarity needed to offer rich, sustained arts experiences.

While existing literature focuses on what infants and toddlers gain from the arts, there is limited discussion of what intentional, meaningful visual arts pedagogy looks like in practice.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative multiple case study approach to investigate meaningful and effective visual arts pedagogy for

infants and toddlers in four early childhood education (ECE) settings in Aotearoa New Zealand. Case study research is particularly well-suited to examining complex practices and generating rich, in-depth understandings of how phenomena unfold in real-world settings (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2014). This approach allowed us to explore the nuanced ways kaiako design, facilitate, and reflect on visual arts experiences with very young children.

Centres were purposively selected through the researchers' professional networks based on their demonstrated commitment to regularly including visual arts in the infant and toddler curriculum through relational, responsive pedagogies. This research has been designed to highlight the voices of practising teachers and leaders and examples of positive and effective pedagogical practices. Therefore, the participants and their centres have agreed to be named in this study, allowing their ideas and co-constructed knowledge to be attributed to them. The following table details the four settings and the participants:

ECE service	Location	Participants
Little Doves Early Learning Centre	Auckland	Jaime, Mieke, Ruby, Sarah, Sonya and Heather
Real Kids Early Learning Centre	Auckland	Anita, Winoa, Louise, Cami, Mary, Mihee.
Hill Street Early Childhood Centre	Wellington	Claire, Sinead.
Daisies Early Education & Care Centre	Wellington	Hannah, Linda, Sarah, Cheri.

Table 1: Participants and Settings

Data collection was conducted over two months and involved multiple methods. At each site, semi-structured interviews were carried out with teachers and leaders to explore their practices and perceptions regarding visual arts pedagogy for the youngest children. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to explore participants' experiences in their own words while allowing flexibility to pursue emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interview questions focused on teachers' understandings of the role of visual arts, influences such as theories and philosophies, how they planned and facilitated experiences, and how they responded to infants' and toddlers' diverse cultural identities and ways of engaging with materials.

Observations were undertaken to document children's interactions with visual arts materials and the pedagogical strategies teachers used to support exploration. The children in the observed experiences were between 6 months and 2 years 6 months of age. Observations captured both planned experiences and spontaneous moments of engagement, providing insight into how visual arts were embedded within daily routines and relationships. Photographs, video clips, and detailed field notes were used to record contextual details, teacher-child interactions, and children's responses to materials (Stake, 2013).

Key documents were also collected and analysed, including centre philosophy statements, curriculum planning documents, and pedagogical documentation such as learning stories and wall

displays. Document analysis helped triangulate findings and offered further understanding of how visual arts were positioned within each centre's culture, values, and curriculum priorities (Yin, 2014).

Data were coded inductively to identify patterns and themes across sites (Braun & Clarke, 2019), with attention to practices that fostered culturally responsive, sustained, and meaningful engagement. Throughout analysis, we aimed to foreground the voices of kaiako and the experiences of infants and toddlers to highlight the relational and contextual nature of visual arts pedagogy. Ultimately, these methods were designed to elicit rich descriptions and new insights into the transformative potential of visual arts as a foundational aspect of education for the youngest learners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Findings and Discussion

A Foundation of Relational Pedagogy

Across all four settings, relational pedagogy was central to meaningful visual arts engagement with infants and toddlers. Kaiako emphasised the importance of knowing children well to be able to recognise moments of interest and offer responsive experiences with materials. As Mihee from Real Kids shared, "when they see a teacher who builds trusting relationships... that invites them to the experience... they know that it's safe to touch, safe to explore." Strong relationships with families also supported participation and a shared understanding of the value of arts-based learning. For example, Hannah from Daisies reflected, "we started a canvas with the parents, and then we let their tamariki add to it too... it was a nice way to enhance their belonging."

Relationships between kaiako were also vital. Shared philosophies and a collective belief in the value of visual arts enabled intentional, consistent practice. Mieke from Little Doves explained, "It's not just one teacher who values the arts, it's the whole team... we can go deeper with the children because we're all working toward the same thing." These relational commitments were informed by frameworks such as Resources for Infant Educators (RIE), Reggio Emilia, sociocultural theory, and bioecological perspectives, all of which emphasise the importance of strong, attuned relationships in early learning (Dalli et al., 2011; Lewin-Benham, 2023; Sandilands, 2016). These influences were evident in teachers' attentiveness to emotional wellbeing throughout visual arts experiences. Kaiako welcomed children onto their laps, noticed signs of sensory discomfort, and responded to children's non-verbal cues signalling readiness to end an experience.



Figure 1. Jaime from Little Doves offers security and presence, enabling toddlers to explore paint with confidence and curiosity.

These relational commitments also included deep thinking about how to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi through bicultural practice. Teachers described how they wove Māori concepts and material choices into visual arts pedagogy in intentional ways. For example, the teaching team at Real Kids reflected,

We centre our practice around the concept of Te Taiao, the natural world, and Te Tumatauranga, the origins of knowledge. Resources such as clay, water, foliage, plants, and sand are natural, open-ended materials gathered from our local area. These materials are not only tactile and sensory-rich, but also deeply connected to our place, whakapapa, and community identity.

This reflection illustrates how bicultural values can be reflected through relationships with place and can be meaningfully enacted through material choices and intentional arts pedagogy (Heta-Lensen & Wrightson, 2019).

Relational pedagogy is widely recognised as foundational in infant and toddler education (Cliffe & Solvason, 2023; Dalli et al., 2011). These findings suggest it also shapes how visual arts experiences unfold. When trust, respect, and cultural responsiveness are embedded in relationships with children, whānau, and colleagues, kaiako are more attuned to children's expressions, more confident in planning sustained experiences, and better positioned to advocate for the arts as a core part of early learning.

An Image of Children as Competent Learners

Across all four settings, kaiako held a view of infants and toddlers as capable, curious, and deserving of meaningful, complex learning experiences. Rather than seeing very young children as passive recipients of care, teachers described them as “researchers” and “investigators” engaged in real-time exploration and theory-building. As Ruby, from Little Doves, explained:

Infants and toddlers have the right to these ways of playing and expressing themselves, to work through whatever their theories are at that time, researching as they are playing with visual arts mediums.



Figure 2. Printmaking as inquiry: With kaiako support, toddlers at Daisies explore materials as researchers, building working theories through hands-on engagement.

This image of the child was crucial in shaping pedagogical decision-making, particularly around the materials made available. Teachers

selected resources not for their simplicity or ease of cleanup, but for their potential to provoke inquiry, extend thinking, and respond to children's interests. Rich, open-ended materials such as soft clay, fine sand, and quality drawing tools were chosen to support satisfying, sensory exploration and enable children to revisit ideas and build working theories through hands-on engagement. These findings reinforce that teachers' image of the child is foundational to curriculum decisions (Malaguzzi, 1994). Our findings suggest that when infants and toddlers are seen as capable learners, kaiako are more likely to offer expressive, sustained experiences that affirm children's agency and identity from the start.

Teachers as Researchers

At each of the four participating settings, kaiako positioned themselves not only as facilitators of learning but as researchers alongside children. A strong culture of inquiry shaped teaching teams' approaches to visual arts, with kaiako regularly engaging in collegial dialogue to reflect critically on their values, decisions, and practices. Teachers questioned what effective visual arts pedagogy looks like in the infant and toddler years, and how their assumptions or habits might support, or limit, children's engagement. As Sarah at Little Doves explained,

We are always looking, through every inquiry, always looking to make sure that there is challenge and learning for the teachers as well as for the children. So, you want to be feeling like you're moving into new territory, so that you're just as curious and excited as the children are.

This researcher stance was supported through pedagogical documentation, highly valued as a way to make learning visible and inform teaching. Teachers used documentation to revisit children's experiences, both to understand learning and to guide what might come next.



Figure 3. Louise from Real Kids carefully documents as Anita works with a small group of children.

In these settings, planning was not formulaic, but a dynamic and thoughtful process. Teachers selected materials, introduced ideas, and offered support with intention, shaped by their evolving understanding of learning. As Oliveira-Formosinho and Peeters (2019) argue, documentation invites kaiako to see themselves and children as co-constructors of learning, fostering a participatory and agentic approach. These findings highlight teacher inquiry as a vital aspect of curriculum development, particularly in under-theorised areas such as visual arts with infants and toddlers.

Organisational Conditions

Across all four settings, strong organisational structures enabled rich visual arts experiences for infants and toddlers. In particular, leadership that valued the arts played a pivotal role in making this work visible, viable, and valued. Affirming findings from our previous studies (Denee et al., 2024), centre leaders shaped routines, timetables, and systems that prioritised time for exploration and teacher collaboration. This included allocating non-contact time, scheduling regular meetings for pedagogical dialogue, and coordinating responsibilities so kaiako could remain present and responsive during arts experiences.

Mary, atelierista at Real Kids, described how these conditions were intentionally created:

We make time for it. We make space for it, and we put it into our day. And there's always a teacher assigned... You make the agreements with the adults in the room, and you make explicit the policies and procedures that go to programme delivery. I think we are also very lucky in the sense that [our leadership] understands that they're staffing for the curriculum.

This collective commitment fostered collaborative teams who supported each other, whether through shared planning, documentation, or stepping in so others could remain engaged with children. All four services also identified above-ratio staffing as essential. None operated at the minimum 1:5 ratio, and each linked their ability to offer sustained visual arts learning to adequate staffing.

The Physical Environment and Material Choices

The study showed that teachers made deliberate, responsive decisions about how visual arts experiences were offered through material choices and environmental arrangements. At Real Kids, kaiako integrated visual arts within the main classroom, enabling children to engage at their own pace and revisit materials throughout the day. Materials were abundant, reusable, and open-ended, supporting sustained exploration.

In contrast, Hill Street, Daisies, and Little Doves took a more structured approach, scheduling small-group sessions where two to five children worked closely with one or two teachers while others managed routines and other spaces. All settings also ensured open access to art materials alongside these planned experiences.

Across sites, teachers selected materials that invited deep inquiry and considered sustainability. As Cami, Centre Director at Real Kids, explained, "the materials are chosen for their quality and for the type of experience that you want to give children." Teachers integrated technology, created inviting atmospheres with music and lighting, and emphasised offering the same materials over time to build familiarity and skill. Sarah, Head Teacher at Daisies, noted this helps children "build relationships with the materials and then learn the purpose of how they could be used." As Hedges (2022) argues, curriculum that sustains children's evolving interests over time can foster metacognitive development and support the formation of learner identities grounded in curiosity, capability, and connection.



Figure 4. Claire from Hill Street models how to roll clay, inviting infants into sustained, sensory-rich material exploration.

These practices reflected a shared commitment to designing rich, aesthetically engaging environments that honoured infants' and toddlers' capacities for inquiry. While previous research has often emphasised child-led, free-play exploration (Ministry of Education, 2017), this study highlights kaiako's active and nuanced role in balancing open-endedness with intentional guidance and support when offering materials in the ECE environment.

Pedagogical Approaches to Support Sustained Engagement

Across all observations, we identified pedagogical practices that supported infants' and toddlers' deep engagement with visual arts materials. Teachers described this as a dynamic "dance" of stepping back to honour children's independent exploration and stepping forward to sensitively guide or extend. Claire from Hill Street likened teaching to being "an octopus with many tentacles," requiring flexibility, responsiveness, and the ability to offer new possibilities without imposing fixed outcomes. Mieke at Little Doves reflected,

We imitate a lot of what they do in response to their involvement and interactions... it becomes that reciprocal kind of dance where you make them eager to share more. You know, 'I can see you. I see what you're doing, and it's exciting to me.'

These findings align with research emphasising the relational and co-constructed nature of early arts engagement (Danko-McGhee, 2023; Lewin-Benham, 2023; Richards & Terreni, 2022). They support Salamon and Harrison's (2015) argument that high-quality pedagogy balances autonomy with sensitive guidance and demonstrates how nuanced actions can foster sustained inquiry for infants and toddlers in Aotearoa New Zealand ECE contexts.

Value of These Experiences for Infants and Toddlers

Teachers in this study articulated the profound value of visual arts experiences for infants and toddlers, describing them as foundational to identity, wellbeing, and lifelong learning. Claire, from Hill Street, expressed:

It fills the soul of a child ...we have an obligation to instil the arts early on so that they have different ways of experiencing and being a human being... If we can instil it now then hopefully children will keep valuing that.

Across all settings, visual arts supported holistic development, nurturing children's sense of self, emotional expression, and connection with others. Dispositional learning was evident, as children showed confidence, perseverance, curiosity, and the ability to navigate uncertainty. Teachers observed delight and wonder as children explored how materials moved and changed in response to their actions. Through sustained engagement, they developed early working theories about materials and practised new techniques, such as grasping clay or using brushes. Visual arts supported communication and language development by offering opportunities for symbolic expression alongside spoken language. Learning was sensory-rich and embodied, strengthening motor coordination.

Mary, from Real Kids, reflected on the long-term impact of these experiences, noting that preschoolers who had engaged deeply with the arts showed confidence and skills that supported later learning. These findings echo research highlighting the multidimensional benefits of early visual arts (Danko-McGhee, 2023; Lewin-Benham, 2023) and reinforce the role of the arts in fostering identity, belonging, and capability from the earliest years.

Implications and Conclusion

This study contributes new insights into the potential of visual arts experiences as a foundational aspect of early childhood education for infants and toddlers. Across all four settings, kaiako demonstrated that when visual arts are positioned as integral rather than peripheral, they can nurture children's identities, foster dispositions such as curiosity and perseverance, and strengthen relationships with people, places, and materials.

A key implication is the need to challenge persistent assumptions that very young children require primarily basic care rather than complex, expressive learning opportunities (Cheeseman, 2017; Salamon & Harrison, 2015). Our findings reinforce that infants and toddlers are capable, agentic learners who benefit from rich aesthetic environments and responsive, intentional pedagogy. This view aligns with the image of the child reflected in *Te Whāriki* as a competent and confident learner and communicator (Ministry of Education, 2017). As Sarah from Little Doves said,

Care is the curriculum, but care alone is not the curriculum. There's still plenty of scope for a really rich, wide curriculum for infants and toddlers, and that's what they deserve...

I think sometimes, in fact, we risk limiting the lives of infants if we interpret the curriculum as care alone.

To support this shift in thinking, kaiako need access to professional learning that builds confidence, deepens understanding, and supports sustained engagement in visual arts pedagogy. This

could include collaborative inquiry within professional learning communities, hands-on experimentation with materials, and reflection on pedagogical documentation. Mentoring from experienced colleagues and time for slow, iterative learning were identified in this study and elsewhere (Dennee et al., 2024) as particularly effective in helping teachers challenge assumptions and develop more intentional, arts-based approaches with infants and toddlers.

The study also highlights the importance of teacher inquiry and collective professional reflection in sustaining high-quality visual arts practice. When kaiako position themselves as researchers alongside children, they remain open to new possibilities and maintain a culture of curiosity and responsiveness (Probine et al., 2024). Leaders played a critical role in enabling this culture through supportive structures such as non-contact time, pedagogical documentation, and shared planning, aligning with Dennee's (2018) research.

Another implication is the value of sustained engagement with materials over time. Rather than offering visual arts as isolated or occasional activities, teachers in this study created environments where infants and toddlers could return to materials, deepen their familiarity, and extend their working theories. This practice affirms the role of repetition and revisiting in building confidence, skill, and a sense of belonging (Hedges, 2022). Teachers interested in focusing on their visual arts practice with infants and toddlers could begin by considering how time could be reframed to enable this. As Clarke (2022) suggests, beginning by examining one aspect of time in the centre and making small shifts can lead to significant impacts for infants and toddlers' learning and wellbeing.

For policy and curriculum development, these findings suggest that clearer guidance is needed on the relational and interpretive dimensions of visual arts pedagogy. While *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017) encourages open-ended, sensory-rich experiences, there is scope to more explicitly articulate the role of the kaiako as active in designing, provoking, and extending children's visual arts exploration. Strengthening professional learning opportunities in this area could build teacher confidence and ensure visual arts are consistently embedded in infant and toddler programmes (Dennee et al., 2024).

In conclusion, visual arts experiences in the early years are not an optional extra but a vital part of how infants and toddlers come to know themselves and the world. By making space for these encounters, physically, relationally, and pedagogically, kaiako plant the seeds of lifelong curiosity, creativity, and connection.

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