

Studio Offerings: How Friendship and Oil Spread

Laurel Curley and Toni DiCastrì

Affiliation: Capilano University

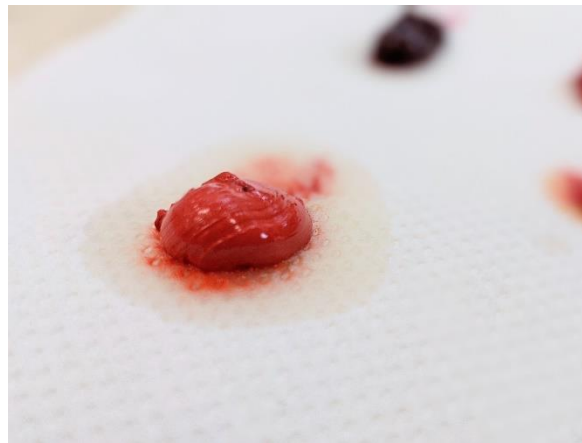
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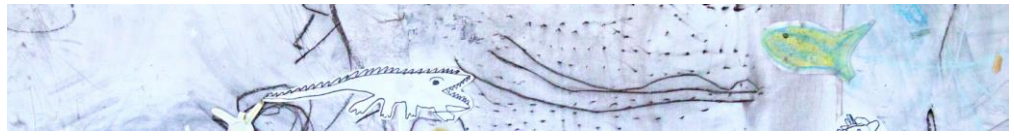
Artist statement

Toni and I met last Spring when we were in a group project together in our curriculum course at Capilano University. This was the first time our artwork and painting processes were shared. When the project was over, we decided it was important for us to stay in touch as we'd made a connection. Fast forward to September 2021, Toni asked me if I'd like to paint with her in the studio on campus. While I was hesitant, as my artistic abilities tend to fall short with visual art, I decided to join her. From that moment onwards, each moment in the studio was special. This is our story.

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Toni walks into the studio and exhales. Walking into this space is a release, a letting go of everything that has happened before, and a separation from what is to come upon leaving. Within the walls of the studio, she can be fully engaged in her process of painting. No expectations, no outside gnawing distractions, no immediacy. Here, time slows and thickens, like the paint on her brush. Laurel is more tentative upon entering, not as familiar with the space and as comfortable yet with the vastness of these moments. Together they sit on the floor in front of the materials Toni has prepared and stare at the blank canvases, pondering over what to paint. A huge bag of oil paints and brushes is placed on the floor between them. Laurel hesitantly reaches for light blue and white. Toni chooses bolder, darker colours: red and green. The weather outside is grim and rain clad, and they notice the cold paint does not spread very well. While the pigments shine, the oil stays in place. The more they use the paint, however, the warmer its oils become.



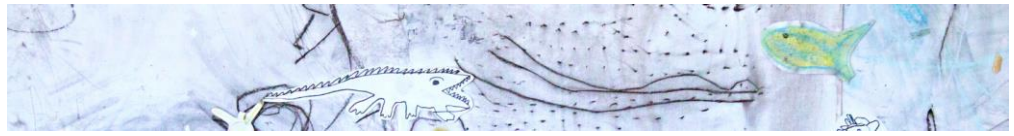
Suddenly the paints begin intermingling, blending and mixing. Toni paints deep, abstract, emotional work. It reminds Laurel of a storm with crashing waves. Laurel decides to paint a tree with bold colours.



To the soundtrack of soft music in the background, Toni and Laurel settle into the process. While their hands are preoccupied, they begin to talk. The conversation flows and pours out. Laughter, crying, giggling, softness. There are hilarious moments but also moments of difficulty and vulnerability. Like a flower opening to the sun, they begin to open up to each other about their struggles. Within the confines of the studio, the highs and lows of their pasts, and concerns for the future emerge. Through crying and pain, there is hugging and unwavering support for each other.

Connection spreads between them. With each stroke of paint, the oil spreads as well. Pigmented material dances between shoes, floor, clothes, and hair. The paint travels across the room. It sticks to hands; it sticks to the sink drain.

But there is also an invisible spreading. Unnoticed, the paint spreads into relational connections with others. This spreading is something that travels home with you. It's something that inspires you but most importantly, it creates unexpected relationships that turn into friendships. Like when oil warms up and spreads, friendships begin to grow the warmer you are with the other person.



Laurel and Toni notice that like the paintings in the studio, they too are canvases, ready to be filled with unimagined possibilities and friendships. Their tree branches spread and continue to grow the closer they become to one another. Sometimes there will be waves of happiness or sadness. They see that through this messy painting process that spreads oil everywhere, comfort, acceptance, and care for each other also spread. This is what the studio has offered them. A place to expand and grow together.





Authors Bio

Laurel Curley is a student in the Early Child Care and Education Degree program and a graduate of The Music Diploma program both at Capilano University. Laurel grew up overseas spending four years in Tanzania and nine years in Bangladesh. She has been to thirty countries and was immersed in many different cultures. Laurel moved back to Canada to pursue university. She is especially passionate about working with children in collaborative, inclusive spaces. Laurel strives to bring her musical expertise and culturally informed ways of thinking into her work with children. It is Laurel's goal to become an elementary school teacher who focuses on inclusivity and child-led learning.

Toni DiCatri is a student in the Early Child Care and Education Degree program. Toni spent her childhood in the Salmon Arm, BC, Canada. She moved to Vancouver thirteen years ago and worked in the health and wellness sector for over a decade. Wanting a career change, she began pursuing her degree in 2018. Toni is very enthusiastic about her work and cares deeply for children. She has a passion for the arts and creating rich, meaningful curriculum centered in place-based pedagogy. When Toni is not working on her degree, you can find her painting abstracts in the studio, or aqua-scaping one of her many aquariums.