

# Listening to student-teachers: between memories and delights, portraits of aesthetic education<sup>1</sup>

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## *Na escuta de estudantes-professoras: entre memórias e miudezas, retratos de formação estética<sup>2</sup>*

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### ABSTRACT

Teacher aesthetic education, related to processes, experiences and repertoires that contribute to broaden the sensitivity and expand the possibilities of interpretation and enactment in the world, is the focus of this paper, the result of research carried out with teachers in initial education. Located in the theoretical-methodological field of autobiographical approaches, the study articulated the foundations of a pedagogy of autonomy and artistic practices. The work with multiple languages supported the knowing-doings of encounter-ateliers, the main device for generating biographical data, designed to investigate the following question: What marks the education of the sensibilities of teachers in initial training? Characterized as a space for the exercise of remembering and weaving narratives of formative processes, in the encounter-ateliers, artistic-expressive artifacts were used, until reaching the narrative writing. The displayed routes indicate that: aesthetic education has been woven, since childhood, with delights, with threads not only from art, but mainly from/in nature; the aesthetic experiences, which connect sensitivity and cognition, take place with the presence of connecting

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figures that help to expand meanings and signify life through affection. An aspect of the methodology was also highlighted: the form and content of the encounter-ateliers, supporting the listening of teachers in training through artistic-handicraft-bodily activities, in addition to validating a singular device for autobiographical research, legitimize an instrument of training that provides more than knowledge of oneself, the practice of oneself.

*Keywords:* Autobiographical narratives. Teacher aesthetic education. Research-training: methodology. Encounter-ateliers. Memory: childhood.

## RESUMO

A formação estética docente, relacionada a processos, experiências e repertórios que contribuem para alargar a sensibilidade e ampliar as possibilidades de interpretação e de atuação no mundo, é o foco do presente artigo, resultado de investigação realizada com professoras em formação inicial. Situado no campo teórico-metodológico das abordagens autobiográficas, o estudo articulou fundamentos de uma pedagogia da autonomia e práticas artísticas. O trabalho com múltiplas linguagens sustentou os saberes-fazeres de encontros-ateliê, principal dispositivo de geração de dados biográficos, arquitetado para perscrutar a questão: O que marca a educação das sensibilidades de professoras em formação inicial? Caracterizado como espaço para o exercício de rememorar e tecer narrativas de processos formativos, nos encontros-ateliê fez-se uso de artefatos artístico-expressivos, até chegar à escrita narrativa. Os percursos visibilizados indicam que: a formação estética vai sendo tecida, desde a infância, com miudezas, com fios não apenas da arte, mas sobretudo da/na natureza; as experiências estéticas, que conectam sensibilidade e cognição, fazem-se com a presença de figuras de ligação que ajudam a ampliar sentidos e significar a vida pelo afeto. Um aspecto da metodologia também foi ressaltado: a forma e o conteúdo dos encontros-ateliê, apoiando a escuta de professoras em formação por meio de fazeres artísticos-artesanais-corporais, além de validar um singular dispositivo para a pesquisa autobiográfica, legitimam um instrumento de formação que propicia mais do que um conhecimento de si, a prática de si.

*Palavras-chave:* Narrativas autobiográficas. Formação estética docente. Pesquisa-formação: metodologia. Encontros-ateliê. Memória: infância.

## Listening to teachers to think about the formation of sensibilities

In the field of teacher training, whether in research, in intervention, in the practice of undergraduate courses or in continuing education, the need to

consider the stories, experiences and singularities inscribed in the life paths of teachers has been pointed out for a long time (JOSSO, 2006; NÓVOA, 2007). The assumption that each person produces his/her training processes in a unique way, constituted by elements that are his/her own and appropriated throughout life, in interactions with the social group of which he/she belongs, in times and spaces that expand or contract the possibilities of being and saying, is placed as absolutely relevant when we discuss training.

In order to identify and understand teacher training processes, particularly with regard to the education of sensitivities, the research that underlies this paper was conducted based on questions that have addressed all of our study interests: How our sense perception is woven and refined? How does the world - culture, art, nature - affect our ways of perceiving and signifying, intelligibly and sensibly, what was lived? Answering these questions is to look at what we have called aesthetic education, related to processes, experiences and repertoires that contribute to expanding sensitivity, which collaborate with the expansion of the possibilities of interpretation and enactment in the world, in society, at school. As discussed by Hermann (2005),

keen aesthetic sensitivity can interpret moral values (equality, human respect, tolerance), more effectively, by the possibility of using the imagination. Only by giving chances to sensitivity, is it possible for someone to realize that differences in cultures and contexts of everyday life modulate the principle of equality and allow for recognizing and respecting differences (HERMANN, 2005, p. 70).

In such a way, one of the focuses of the investigation was to look for and analyze the marks of the education of the sensibilities of students-teachers in initial education. Students of pre-service teacher education courses, of Master's in Pre-school Education and Master's in Pre-school Education and Teaching of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education at the University of Évora<sup>3</sup>, Évora, Portugal participated in the research.

3 In Portugal, the qualification for teaching in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education consists of two phases: Teaching degree course in Basic Education for three years, common for all teachers (Early Childhood Education and Elementary School 1st to 6th grade), plus a Master's Degree of 3 or 4 semesters as opted, respectively for qualification for Early Childhood Education or Elementary Education (1st to 4th grade) or for a qualification that combines the two skills (case of the Master's in Pre-school Education and Teaching of the 1st Cycle of Basic Education). For more information, see: Folque (2018).

The constituted group gathered 13 students, nine students from the pre-service teacher education courses and four students from the Pre-school Master and First Cycle of Basic Education, all female, aged between 19 and 25 years. It is important to note that the participants came from different regions of Portugal: three from the Algarve, six from Alentejo, three from central Portugal and one from Ribatejo.

The theoretical-methodological design of the study implied, above all, listening to the students, in order to open space for remembrances and narratives and, thus, raise the identification of elements that contributed to the formation of their sensibilities, namely in childhood. Such listening was made possible in the time-space of encounter-ateliers, a privileged methodological device for the production of data. There were four encounter-ateliers offered to participants organized into two groups, held every two weeks, between the months of October and December 2018. The encounter-ateliers took place on an extracurricular basis - in addition to the workload of the academic disciplines they attended regularly - and participation was free, with registrations by invitation to the classes of the courses already mentioned. The encounters were documented by means of records, diverse in form and complementary in scope, allowing greater breadth in the capture of data: short videos, photographs, transcribed oral reports, notes in field notebooks. The documentation generated through such records made up the *corpus* of analysis, which will be detailed below.

## **The encounter-ateliers: memories, narratives and expressive languages**

To weave the methodology, we were inspired by the foundations of the biographical atelier proposal, the theoretical and practical principles of the art atelier, especially regarding the use of expressive materialities and languages, and the general principles of a pedagogy of autonomy.

The “biographical atelier of the project”, as an investigative-formative device, proposes in its procedures a prospective dynamic of the life stories’ reports, linking “the subject’s past, present and future and aims to bring out their own personal project, considering the dimension of the report as construction of the subject’s experience and life history as a space for change open to the project of the self” (DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2006, p. 359). The set of procedures designed raises and strengthens the “biographical reflexivity”, since it activates processes of “biography” established by the stories of life and training.

From the proposal formulated by the author, we focused on her fundamentals, which helped us to think and define research-training devices that would contribute, through collective participation in a set of articulated encounters, to the production of autobiographical narratives, for the organization of the spatiotemporal itinerary and for the presentation and interpretation of oneself. It was not a concern of the study to work prospectively, towards a project, towards the future, although we considered that the proposed paths articulated the temporalities, given that the participants were in a regular process of teacher education, they were taking a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

The principles of the art atelier assumed in the research come from the dialogue with the educational project of the kindergartens in Reggio Emilia, Italy, in which the atelier is conceived as an idea and a place, a cultural vehicle for the development of children and teachers (VECCHI, 2017). Taking the art atelier as an idea and a place is extremely important, as it carries an integrated view of the processes: if, on the one hand, the atelier appears as a time-place to explore variations of languages, with instruments, techniques and materialities that enhance them, in order to sensitize the person's taste and aesthetic sense, whether adults or children; on the other hand, it is visible that, in the defense of the plurality of expressive languages and their connections, we have identified the place of combating the hierarchy of knowledge and fields of knowledge. In this idea-place, the importance of the materials is highlighted: they carry memories and meanings, raise suggestions and interpretive constructions of the real. As Vecchi (2017, p. 64) said: "The matter, through a process of polysensory memories, of connections of a perceptual character, can allude to a certain reality, by recalling it, telling it or representing it".

These principles of the art atelier complement the perspective discussed by some authors in the field of autobiographical studies, according to which handicrafts, body experimentation, contact with diverse materials, the enjoyment of an empathic-creative time, open to expressiveness free from model tensions, amplify the space for narrative and self-interpretation (FORMENTI, 1996; RUGIRA, 2008; OSTETTO; BERNARDES, 2015; OSTETTO, 2016).

In turn, a "pedagogy of autonomy", marked, among other characteristics, by the principles of ethics, aesthetics and politics; that understands the precedence of reading the world over reading the word; which defends authenticity, openness and availability to the production of knowledge, curiosity and restlessness as essential elements to the processes of meaning and appropriation of knowledge, points to the necessary human recognition "as a social and historical, as a thinking, communicating, transformative, creative, dream-making being" (FREIRE, 2011, p. 42).

A “pedagogy of autonomy” is testimonial, since it is based on the person, his/her existential word, inscribed in the dialectic of doing and thinking about doing, to then reaffirm paths or change of direction. It is also a relational pedagogy, because “*being in the world necessarily means being with the world and with others*” (FREIRE, 2011, p. 57) and, therefore, presupposes attentive listening, which restrains and validates the differences and incompleteness that constitute the human being. In this context, listening is a fundamental element: “Listening is obviously something that goes beyond everyone’s hearing. Listening, in the sense discussed here, means the permanent availability on the part of the subject who listens to be open to the other’s speech, to the other’s gesture, to the other’s differences” (FREIRE, 2011, p. 117). Listening, freedom, imagination, responsibility, dialogue are keywords that define and support a dialogical pedagogy and were assumed in the structuring and development of the research encounter-ateliers.

With these principles, the encounter-ateliers were held in a common classroom at the University of Évora. For that, the environment was arranged in each session: with the removal of tables, we left an empty central space in which the chairs were arranged in a circle so that we could develop the activities with greater mobility, sometimes sitting, sometimes getting up, walking or dancing, as per the proposal. In a corner of the room, a kind of mini-atelier was set up, composed of basic expressive materials, such as scissors, glue, colored pencils, colored pens, magazine clippings (words and images), colored paper, made available to support the creation of narratives in multiple languages.

As explained above, the main focus of the proposals made in each session was aimed at experimenting with creative practices and poetic languages, in order to intertwine theory and practice, reflections and direct contact with different expressive materialities. Songs and dances, drawings, weaving and literature were part of the proposals.

Songs were usually present at the beginning of each encounter, as a way of greeting the constituted group, inviting them to connect. It was like a call from the group to the circle, a kind of harmonization for the collective work that would follow. These rhymes could also be danced. The choreographies, based on simple, symbolic and integrating movements, contributed to reinforce the call to be present, to bring the whole body to the *circle*. We understand, through Rugira (2008), that the body and sensoriality are important elements to be considered in the research-training of autobiographical matrix. The author defends that “the relationship with the body constitutes an indisputable pillar of the processes of formation and collective creation (...). The relationship with the body (...) restores our capacities to learn, adapt and react” (RUGIRA, 2008, p. 73). In one of the encounters, the body was at the center of the remembrance

action, when the participants brought songs they heard or sang in childhood, which were marked in their affective-cultural repertoires.

As for the stories read, we quote “*Guilherme Augusto Araújo Fernandes*” (FOX, 1995) and “*The Five Senses*” – “*Os cinco sentidos*” (QUEIRÓS, 2009), whose plots contributed to the work of evoking memory and to the dialogue about how we apprehend the world through all our senses, which are channels by which we affect and are affected, building aesthetic experiences.

From the dynamics assumed in the encounters, we highlight two devices that were part of it and constituted spaces *par excellence* of self-narratives: “As if it were my portrait: the image of art speaks of me” and the “Notebook of memories & delights”. The proposal “As if it were my portrait: the image of art speaks of me” was intended to raise the first self-narratives, from the visualization of an art image. Thus, at the first encounter, also as a form of personal presentation, a box containing numerous postcards with reproductions of works of art by different artists, passed from hand to hand. Randomly, without choosing, each participant took a postcard. When the whole group had a postcard in their hands, the invitation was formulated: to look at the image, to summon the imagination and, in an exercise of reflection on personal characteristics and ways of being, to speak about themselves “as if”. And then, in the dialogue with the colors, shapes and themes printed on the card they had in hand, the participants, one by one, presented themselves to the group as if, in that image/work, their portrait was printed. In addition to being a provocation to broaden how they see themselves and imagine themselves, establishing subjective connections, belonging to each one in particular, it was an invitation for them to revive stories and weave narratives, enunciating to the group a portrait of themselves, through the spoken word.

In turn, as a device for generating biographical data, the “Notebook of memories & delights”, based on the work of Ostetto and Bernardes (2019), was proposed as a personal space that could activate acts of memory and invite the recording of stories and delights - details, loose threads, flashes of memories, feelings and images, like what seems to be of no use, but which is evident in the process. Its creation articulated two types of notebook registration: the artist notebook and the pedagogical practices diary, which are found in the fields of Art and Education, respectively.

From the field of art, more directly related to the artist’s work, comes the practice of keeping a notebook, as a support for ideas, observations, sketches, descriptions and/or images created by its author. Known as an “Artist’s Notebook”, it usually consists of using small notebooks or blocks of papers, whose malleability and portability allow the artist to carry them with him/her, at any time and place. It appears as a space for experimenting and documenting

the creation processes of its author (JORENTE, 2009). Visual organization is a preponderant element, and its expressive composition is based, mainly, in visual languages, with drawings, collages, sketches, paintings, photographs.

In the field of education, especially related to teaching practices, the exercise of taking notes on processes and experiences has been pointed out as a fruitful space-time for reflection on what was lived and projection of living the pedagogical relationship. The “record book”, or “practice diary”, or simply “daily record”, can be defined “as an instrument of pedagogical work, as a reflective document for teachers, space in which they mark what was lived - conquests, discoveries, uncertainties, questions, fears, daring -, and in whose dynamics they can appropriate their actions” (OSTETTO, 2017, p. 19). Warschauer (1993) ponders that, when registering, we leave marks, weave stories, affirm the experience composing a portrait of what was lived. And, the author continues, this exercise is fundamental to the process of teacher self-training, because “the portrait of what was lived provides special conditions for the *act of reflecting*” (WARSCHAUER, 1993, p. 61). In the enunciated perspectives, the register has been used by teachers as a basis for documenting courses, for theorizing the practice and as a device for permanent self-training.

Registration, memory, history, narrative, imagination and creation are elements that are articulated in the exercise of producing a diary which, in turn, opens paths for the exercise and affirmation of the teaching authorship. Unlike the “artist’s notebook”, in which the image and the visual organization of the content are preponderant marks; in the “record book”, written language is mainly used, although it may be marked by different textual genres and with the style of those who produce it.

Considering the research objectives, which focused on narratives of aesthetic education, the definition of data production devices that dialogued with the artistic field was placed as a requirement for methodological coherence. In such a way, we bring together practices of education and art and, based on the aforementioned work (OSTETTO; BERNARDES, 2019), the “Notebook of memories & delights?” was conceived as a support to receive memory findings, sheltering them in the form of words and images. A space to compose a mosaic of elements considered important for the formation of the narrators’ sensitivity.

In the notebook designed for our research, aspects related to the five senses were intentionally marked, through which, considering the theoretical contribution adopted, memories of aesthetic experiences could be accessed and reverberated. In such a way, along the pages of the small notebook with sheets with no guidelines, stamps with keywords were arranged that, taken as a whole, configured a script as an invitation to remember: Flavors, Smells, Colors, Textures, An object to remember, My games, Affections, Singing songs,



Favorite places, Map of my backyard, A longing, An unforgettable story. Each keyword opened a certain number of blank pages, to be filled in the process by the participants' narratives, in dialogue with what the indicated words elicited.

In possession of his/her "Notebook of memories & delights", each participant would compose his/her memories, little by little, during the four encounter-ateliers. At the beginning of each session, while waiting for the whole group to arrive, or, at the end, while getting ready to leave, the students visited the mini-atelier assembled in the room to compose the notebook, according to each participant's rhythm, if they wished so and without a defined time frame. Some narratives were shared in conversation circles, others were collected in the notebooks.

The biographical material gathered and available was organized in tables, following the script suggested in the notebook, in order to provide an overview of the narratives born during the encounter-ateliers, giving the matter of the lived and its themes. Like a map, it intended to accentuate the lines of experiences that allow a peek at plots, compositions and scenarios that, taken as a whole, point to paths of aesthetic education. Built mainly from reading the notebooks of memories & delights, from the gathering/organization of the elements present in it, following the aforementioned keywords, the mapping carried out also resorted to oral or written narratives, produced in the conversation circles of the meetings. Thus, through the organization of biographical data in integrative tables, the content of the notebooks and oral and/or written narratives presented was systematized to generate an overview. In seeking to understand the particularities and/or similarities of registered elements, the analysis was made from the connections established between the biographical elements shown in the narrative records, the contexts of their production and the objectives of the investigation.

## **On the tracks of aesthetic education: experiences and senses recognized**

Of the lines that surround the formation of aesthetic sensitivity, in this analysis, we focus on the experiences of activation of the five senses, identified in the memoirs and notes of delight of the participants' childhood. They are reliefs of sensory and perceptual opportunities shared in family life, at school and in the midst of nature. They are smells, flavors, textures; toys and games, objects and affections, songs and places that echo in the memory, delight

that, apparently, would remain there in the land of things of the past, perhaps irrelevant. Experiences with artistic languages, opportunities for contact with art, at home and at school, are also made visible and will be considered here, forming the large panel of sensitivities activated in experiences.

In the narratives that refer to smells, between home and school, the smells of nature appear in almost all the narrated memories (only one participant does not refer to nature). They talk about the smell of the sea and/or breeze; rain; wet earth; flowers; fruits; countryside; the morning dew; the harvest; pine forest; the fire/flame. They are scents of the world, as the poet says, that lead to stories, to the past, but they can also dream of the future: “With the nose we smell the scents of the world. / Smells that pass through the air / If the rain falls, the smell of the wet earth / makes us think about the joy of the roots. (...). / The smell leads us to dream further” (QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 12-13).

From family life, the memories of smells are predominantly linked to the grandparents’ house - be it food prepared by the grandmother, be it the atmosphere of the house, its perfume, be it the fruits of the vegetable garden or the flower garden. These aspects are present in the reports of half of the participants.

With regard to school life, the smells of the materials used in the educational routine - of plasticine, felt-tip pen, glue stick, PVA glue and paper used in work and activities; the teacher’s perfume; the smell of the elements of the external spaces, close to nature (the smell of the playground grass, of the kindergarten clay, the smell of chlorinated water in swimming lessons) are in the named set. There are also general references that tell us about the environment: “I remember the smell of the school”, write two participants, without giving further details.

The flavors shown are related to affections, and the foods prepared by family members appear in almost all narratives: the grandmother, the mother, the aunt are the parental figures responsible for the childhood flavors. As in the poet’s verses, tastes carry memories, they are stories: “With the mouth we feel the taste of things: / the sweet, the bitter, the sour, the soft, the strong. / But the taste awakens our memory. (...). / The flavor shortens time. / We find out that each taste / holds a story” (QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 14).

More than half of the narrators remember the textures of elements of nature, such as river sand, beach sand, earth, tree bark, leaves, grass, stones; and animal hair, such as horses, cats and sheep. Fabrics are also remembered, such as soft pajamas, warm sheets, thick hair, grandma’s sewing fabrics, sleeping diapers. Yes, the skin is the gateway, root, connection with the world around: “Through the skin we experience / the sensations of heat, cold, pain, pleasure. / Stepping on the ground, our feet / feel its roughness or softness. (...). / The skin is the root covering the entire body” (QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 16-17).

From the places of remembrance, where they liked to be when they were children, spaces appear in the narratives of all the participants, where the whole body gets involved, surrenders, is wrapped, enjoys experiments that reverberate feelings of belonging, pleasure and joy in the skin. They are predominantly places in nature, such as the beach, river, countryside, homestead, vegetable garden, backyard. In general, these places are associated with the company of family figures, especially grandparents. Also linked to nature and open, free spaces, there are memories of toys and games, such as climbing a tree, playing with water, earth, leaves, branches, pebbles...

In addition to the involvement with spaces in nature, in memory, they bring toys and games, made objects and relationships of affections: bicycle, dolls, teddy bear, toy computer; books, scout scarf, ballet shoes, kindergarten pillow. When the stories tell about favorite games, the vast majority speak of make-believe games (houses, dolls, doctors, parents and children, chefs, teachers).

Of the songs remembered, they were named: traditional children's songs, songs from films and cartoons they watched on television, songs from the adults' repertoire, songs from the popular songbook/folkloric ranch. They are soundscapes, unveiled from the act of singing/listening to the songs shared in the encounter-ateliers. The poet says that:

“With the ears we hear / the silence of the world. (...) / If we listen to music, / our body rests with the melody of the notes. (...) / When we listen, / we imagine distances, / we build stories, / we discover new landscapes” (QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 10-11).

What about the possibilities of expression and experimentation in childhood, in school spaces? The narratives have reduced possibilities, mainly related to the productions, materials and techniques known to the artistic field. They say, for example, that following models was the rule and, therefore, the proposals gave rise to insignificant experiences, or, in the testimony of two participants<sup>4</sup>:

“[...] *there was no incentive to create, they just worried that we would not exceed the outlines and about considering works beautiful or ugly*” (Carmen).

4 The proper names were substituted, according to the agreement in the Free and Informed Consent Term signed by the participants.

*“[In childhood] the activity was painting, drawing, making gifts, arranging the room; painting of pre-drawn pictures and had to paint on the outline. They were poor experiences ...” (Cândida).*

The expression “do not exceed the outline” denotes traditional school practices in dealing with the expressive field, generally supported by a mistaken understanding of artistic languages, encompassing the view of art as a way of putting oneself at the service of other areas of knowledge, resulting in distance of the learning subject with drawing, sometimes causing even the repression of graphic-pictorial authorship. We can see this mark in the narratives of other research participants, when they report on the activity of drawing, one of the first languages of childhood.

*“At school, the illustration was to look and copy” (Bela).*

*“I had to follow the model. I got the idea that I have no skills for drawing, but I like to paint” (Caetana).*

*“I don’t know if it comes from school or not, but I think drawing is not easy. I even draw, if I have to, but I don’t feel comfortable drawing” (Antônia).*

*“At school I drew what was required, I would do it without pleasure. I remember that the teacher helped to fix the drawing that was not good” (Manuela).*

*“My older sister draws very well. But I have no skills, I don’t know how to do it. I was looking at her drawings and I liked them” (Dora).*

*“Once, at school, the teacher complained to my mother that I didn’t know how to paint, that I didn’t match the colors. They had a painting book, it was worth a grade. So I had to paint right, inside the lines, at the limit and with the right colors” (Cleo).*

In the context of the school, the models and the lack of meaning are evident in the recalled experiences and carry consequences in the distancing of the graphic-pictorial creation from adult life.

## **Aesthetic education takes place between delights and mediators**

Among the biographical data produced in the ateliers, part of which were presented in the previous session, we highlight for analysis triggers of significant sensory experiences and/or important markers of the formation of sensitivities, constitutive aspects of the aesthetic education pathways: the presence of mediators of experiences, contact with elements of nature such as aesthetic initiation, opportunities and/or limits for experimentation with expressive languages, the body, its containment and/or expansion.

Among the mediators of the experiences, the parental figures are remembered and named in the reports of activation of the senses: parents, grandparents, aunts appear as the primary connection with the world around them, especially in childhood. Grandparents are the main “connecting figures” present in the narratives, a trend already observed in training reports in Josso’s (2006) research. When considering the life stories as revisiting the links that inhabit us, the referred researcher points out: “Kinship ties are undoubtedly the most evoked in the reports (...). It is necessary to mention here the very particular place that grandparents occupy in almost all reports” (JOSSO, 2006, p. 376).

The gestures, feelings and participation that involve the discovery of enchantment around the world appear largely in the affective encounter with grandparents and the territories in which they live - the village, the house, the vegetable garden, the backyard, the garden -, are cited as favorite places in the memory of the children they used to be.

*“The grandparents’ village was my favorite place. I miss my grandfather and the complicity of playing with him” (Amália).*

*“Living in an apartment, I don’t have a yard, but I designed the one for my grandparents’ house. Currently the structure remains, but we no longer have these animals. But when I was little, it was like this” (Sueli).*

*“[I take with me] the taste of Aunt Joaquina’s almond tart, and the food made by my grandmother. And the taste of figs picked straight from the great-aunt’s fig tree. The smell of the pine forest, the smell of the harvest” (Manuela).*

*“My favorite place was the countryside, where I went to look for mushrooms with my father. It felt like a lot of adventure. I liked to be there, to participate with him” (Cleo).*

*“The figure [cut and pasted in the notebook] is for remembering the river where I used to go with my grandfather; it was close to the house, it had stones and foliage” (Carmen).*

Clues about aesthetic education are in the times, places and materialities that went through the activation of the senses in childhood: the memories talk about whole body activities, with water, earth, trees, leaves, fruit that made up, so to speak, a territory that invited experimentation. Nature, populated by fields, backyards, orchards, gardens, turns into ateliers, places to taste sensations, to delight in the natural elements and their properties, which provoke the feelings of any child who is discovering the world, to experience its flavors, smells, textures, colors and sounds - river and beach sand, wet earth, tree bark, leaves, grass, stones; animals (horse hair, cat fur, sheep to name a few), fruit trees, rain, are elements that make up the sensory experiences, in general, by all participants.

This presence of the elements of nature as significant experiences, and, therefore, marked in memory, reiterates paths present in teaching narratives evidenced in other studies. Silva's research (2017), for example, heard teachers of Early Childhood Education about their aesthetic education itineraries, and the contents made visible through narrative interviews point to the spaces of nature and contact with natural elements - water, earth and fire - as events that enhance sensitivity education, as a privileged time and place for aesthetic initiation. The author analyzes that:

The relationship with the body in life and in nature, at different times, involves creativity, sensitivity, imagination and feelings. These are moments when teachers recognize that learning about the world takes place in an aesthetic way, from the pleasure of contact with the environment to the possibilities of imagination and creation. [In the narratives] We see the place of poetry being nourished in the interaction with the natural world, revealing the vitality of continuing, as adults, connected to nature (SILVA, 2017, p. 175).

Corrêa's work (2018) also points out the contact with nature as a significant element in the formation of sensitivities. In seeking to identify the place of art in

the life history and teaching of Early Childhood Education teachers, the author found, in the teachers' narratives, experiences with/in nature that proved to be important routes of aesthetic education. In the author's words:

The contact with nature also appears as an important element of aesthetic education, it appears as a space of inspiration, a means of sensitizing the eyes, encouraging imagination and creation, awakening sensations and emotions that retake beauty. The backyard of the house brings back memories of childhood that, in contact with nature, through play, is a place of poetry (...). Aesthetic sensitivity is touched and cultivated not only in the encounter with art and artistic productions, but in the encounter with everything that surrounds us, especially the elements, territories and landscapes in nature (CORRÊA, 2018, p. 140).

Albano (2018), when discussing imagination and artistic experience in childhood, returns to his own childhood and brings back memories of his first atelier: his grandfather's farm. His poetic narrative corroborates the indications referred to nature as a space-time of aesthetic initiation, reinforcing the idea that sensitivities are woven into relationships with nature, art, culture, and mediated by significant "connecting figures" (JOSSO, 2006).

Tabarana farm, my grandpa Raul's, was my first atelier (...). The orchard was the "warehouse" of the atelier, always full of materials available for our creations. Fruit that was still green were transformed into animals, which inhabited small pens built with twigs (...). An inexhaustible source of sensory experiences, the farm was lavish in colors, textures, aromas and flavors. (...). Sensory experiences, with colors, aromas, flavors, textures filled my imagination, were raw material for my drawings, my stories, my personal aesthetic, which later permeated my conception of childhood and aesthetic experience (ALBANO, 2018, p. 9-11).

As indicated in the general characterization of the participants, it can be seen that they come from villages or towns or have a close relationship with them, strong family and emotional connections. Thinking of the village life and its landscapes, a picture with fields of plantations, cultivation of the land, production of food, creation of animals is easily painted in the imagination. Certainly, because they are part of this geography, the participants have opened

up the contact with nature and, therefore, reveal their marks in the biographical construction.

When dealing with biography, body and space, Delory-Momberger (2012) draws attention to the fact that the spatial dimension also constitutes experience, the sensitive relationship that we maintain with space, through the basic spatial unit. Our body defines points of view, relationships and ways of representing itself and the other. According to the author:

Space is not just a continent, a receptacle for our states and our actions, it is an integral part of our experience, it is constitutive of our experience. First, space is constitutive of our experience because we ourselves are *space*: our bodily being belongs to the extension and materiality of space; we are, therefore, *space in space*. The original core of our experiences is constituted by this sensitive and dynamic relationship between our body-space and the space that encompasses us and in which we find other bodies-space (DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2012, p. 66).

In the textualization of the experiences, the participants in our research repeatedly spatialized the narrative content: their house, their room, the attic of the house, the grandparents' house, the countryside, the beach, the river, the vegetable garden and the grandparents' garden, the aunt's kitchen, the schoolyard, the street, delimiting a geography, as pointed out by Delory-Momberger (2012). Due to its physical characteristics and the constitution of open socio-affective elements, this geography invited sensory exploration, in a way it defined the experiential typology and, in the biographical account, determined the thought that shaped the narrative. Physical, social and cultural characteristics of the space - urban or rural, central or peripheral, domestic or public, private or collective, open or closed, etc. - offer resources for certain ways of thinking, feeling and acting, leading to appropriations, representations and elaborations of self-portraits. The author's words clarify this issue:

Each of us builds and develops a *cartography* that is his/her own, describable in terms of places, sites, territories, networks, connections, routes, etc., which is not impossible to be reconstructed. (...). It is in the context of this personal geography that we need to take into account what I will call *signified space*, that is, the space as it is open to our representations, to the meanings and values that we lend to them (DELORY-MOMBERGER, 2012, p. 74).



The biographical data evidenced in our research reinforce the centrality of places in nature as living spaces, “signified spaces” by the narrators as territories, paths, places of first awareness, experienced with the body, all the senses.

The discussion put on the body in/with space as a dimension of the biographical experience leads us to the studies of Rugira (2008), which bring the body and the sensoriality to the research, work and discussion of the field of autobiographical approaches. In such a way, the author defends, for autobiographical practices, experiential procedures that contribute not only to “knowledge of oneself”, through the reflexive way of thinking, but “practice of oneself” (RUGIRA, 2008, p. 86), through the action, which is corporal, sensorial, directed to the refinement of perception and attention, articulating feeling and thinking. This aspect helps us to shed light on some regions that have remained in the shadow of the process, but which, once identified, offer a fertile field for reflection on teacher aesthetic education. As described in the research methodology, the organization of the encounter-ateliers stood out for the contact with materialities and artistic-expressive proposals, which presupposed the movement of the body, the sensorial experimentation, the perceptual displacement and the provocation of creative processes. At first, there were reactions of discomfort, of little availability to surrender, to experimentation, to the “practice of oneself” of the whole body. Scribbling, getting in the circle, singing, relying on multiple languages seemed like strange bodily actions. Uncomfortable bodies, in that first moment, the revealed gestures, between fearful and restrained, were interpreted as marks of social practices, especially school ones, which operate by controlling, unifying and silencing expressiveness and authorial languages.

After that first phase, the relaxation of the bodies, the opening and the willingness to enter the circle, enter the proposed dialogue of feeling and thinking about the formation of sensibilities through the ways of doing, became evident in the gestures that were redefining. For example, a primeval gesture like the one that marks the drawing appeared in the narratives as controlled, repressed and, during the encounter-ateliers, it was made visible. The crystallized notions of what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is a good or bad design, what is right or wrong in the scope of artistic practices and, consequently, of teaching practices related to art, gained space to be brought to awareness, enunciated and questioned. Like or dislike drawing, producing drawings or not drawing, were identified as elements that formed their sensibilities and were impregnated in the image of themselves as not able to create, to produce drawings, particularly.

However, as one participant wrote:

*“You have to do it to like art; by doing, one can demystify the idea that there is no way, or that one does not like this and that. For example, the dramatization: someone may have no skills, but goes after them. Because [art] is knowledge, necessary for childhood educators” (Manuela).*

In the case of encounter-ateliers, the willingness to put oneself into a full-body experience was essential to provoke senses, remember, narrate and project the possibility of constructing other meanings - in relation to their creative processes and art in school, in life - what is the continuous task of each one.

### **From methodology to implications for training courses: final considerations**

To wrap up, we make considerations about the methodology, about the aesthetic dimension and, from these, about implications for teacher training courses. The methodology, taking the form of ateliers, provided contact with artistic-handicraft knowledge and, thus, offered opportunities for the opening of expressive channels of the learning subject, full body and multidirected. We believe that the form and content of the procedures that supported the encounter-ateliers validated them not only as a device for research, but as a training tool that provides, in addition to knowing oneself, the practice of oneself (RUGIRA, 2008). This way of doing and expressing oneself using multiple languages (artistic, handicraft, scientific) displaces learning subjects from simple readers and consumers of cultural productions to authors, as Sérgio Niza tells us, in the interview given to Peças (2005), as producers of their languages and narratives. This change of place in the formative process, as a possibility to broaden the perception, contributes to each and every one (re)view themselves as a sensitive being, capable of entering into the domain of different languages - in order to know, enjoy and produce in dialogue with art and culture, and not just talk, distantly and not implicitly, about them.

Regarding the aesthetic dimension in life stories, we reiterate that it is being woven with delights, not only with the threads of art, but, above all, of nature, a preponderant formative element in the childhood of the participants. The experiences that connect sensitivity, cognition and affection are made with the presence of connecting figures, in bonds that help to expand meanings and signify life. Perhaps the teachers of the training courses could become liaison figures, who approach the sensitive dimensions involved in the educational act!

The research results also point to the essentiality of listening to teachers in training, opening space for narratives of memories and delights that constitute their itineraries of aesthetic education, paying attention and welcoming their wholeness. Teacher training courses need to guarantee opportunities for the reconnection of adults with their languages, through experimentation and expression with the whole body, all the senses, so that they gain confidence in their creative potential. It is necessary to support processes of (re)recognition of artistic-cultural experiences and knowledge of teachers in training, so that they can welcome and enhance, in the students with whom they will work, the multiple possibilities of expression and aesthetic sensitivity, contributing to building themselves as authors.

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