

## What makes Reggio indoor design, environments and work spaces so good for young children? [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reggio\\_Emilia\\_approach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reggio_Emilia_approach)

**Design and respect of INDOOR environments** – there were many levels and platforms in all rooms – i.e. the block area was a raised platform of around 30cm so construction can be cleaned around easily, but what this does is also draw attention to and focus children on the area. Open roof space was turned into lofts, creating extra areas for children. Many of the rooms didn't look like ours, there were **the raised block areas**, but then there were tables (no chairs) for working on near shelving of resources, and occasional book area (just a mat and pillows), limited dress ups, mats and dramatic play equip. They reminded me of workrooms. But that is also because of the resources and materials in there. They also had separate sleep rooms and dining areas for all children, so in essence, **these workrooms can be designed just for learning**. There were lots of baskets and shelving of different metals (nuts, bolts, various odds and ends which I don't even know what they are called!!) **but they were all quality materials, designed to get children thinking and wondering about**. There were also large art tables, with shelving of art supplies available.

*No teacher desks in rooms (yah!!).*

**Any available space is also thought about in terms of 'how to use to engage children'. So hallways are used, alcoves are used, kitchens and cooks are used (a tasting atelier!) etc etc.**

**Ateliers (studio spaces)** – amazing!!! So well resourced, presented and designed.

I saw a 4 year old girl sit for over an hour in the middle of the table whilst her peers made clay sculptures of her. She sat cross legged, and just chatted with her friends, but held her position for all of this time.

**Mini ateliers** were also placed in hallways where there might have once been a large storeroom but doors are removed and shelving /table placed there. **The children can move out from their room into this hallway space and back.**

**New childcare centre:** many pieces of equipment design by Play+Soft (see <http://www.studiouk.net/index.php?id=10>). It looked great because it was all shiny and new, and had features such as a darkened rooms where children could explore light/projectors/shadows etc, lofts and ramps with steps alongside leading to raised platforms in rooms, posting boxes, toilets fresh flowers and small steps placed outside cubicle (which were used as chairs so children waiting to use toilet could sit and talk with their friends) ...essentially it was the little touches that made it different.

## What was valuable about the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood.

**Their trust** in children's thinking – even very young children were engaged in projects and their thinking made clearly visible to families and educators alike through documentation. Pedagogues trust children to engage in 'passionate' dialogue, to problem solve and negotiate. Pedagogues think about how we can interpret the children's gestures, expressions or thoughts. How can we make them visible, bring them to life and give them identity after having observed and interpreted (in relation to documentation).

**Materials** given to infants were the same in many cases as those presented to older children. The resources placed in infants room where there to engage their thinking and to develop relationships, not just toys to be played with.

**Documentation** – their daily reflections are the same as ours, a daily page with a commentary on what happened that day (all in Italian though and there were no translations of these documents. So I am saying this with 'assumptions'). There were many photos though of daily experiences.

**"When you take a picture, you are not taking a piece of decoration – you construct a piece of reality"**

**"You are not taking a picture of a child, you are taking a picture of how you are thinking about the child"**

Much of the documentation on the walls was old, many pieces over one year old, and the **pedagogues said that they use these as a reflective tool with children**. There was not much documentation in children's rooms, probably 3 to 4 key pieces. They were often large pieces covering a project. Much of the project work is made into books for families and others. No individual files for children. Documentation develops within the group. Some use web type planning, but don't plan ahead – plan possibilities and provocations...

**Documentation Centre:** the Documentation Centre was established to support the pedagogues in their documentation and research. This place is also where they archive the documentation from all of their services, to be used by the teachers today as resources, but also for visitors to peruse. It also has a library and a space to 'make' documentation (computers/printers/other materials). It is well resourced and the focus is in the documentation as a community and educative resource to be used regularly.

**In my opinion the majority of C&K's underlying philosophical beliefs and values are similar to the Reggio Emilia model. We are moving towards understanding the pedagogy of listening and implementing this model. Still a way to go though, but we are identifying with it and engaging in it. To see it in practice was invaluable.**

