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**Description / Abstract:**

My research builds on the long-established importance of tangible materials in active learning and play in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). In this presentation, I will share fieldwork observations from my PhD project (NCAD, 2021) conducted in a single ECEC setting in the West of Ireland. In my research, I focus on the spontaneous emergence of moments of affective intensity between young children and ordinary materials in their ECEC environment. I argue that these everyday unmediated moments of sensitivity for children are of significance to inclusive, democratic education policy and practice, particularly in the context of the Anthropocene. However, due to their spontaneity and delicacy, these moments risk being supressed, overlooked, or misconstrued. I explore how arts-based education research (ABER) methods, can contribute to valuing and protecting such moments. I also examine how small moments which matter to children, relate to the big challenges of contemporary education. I will share my findings of how an artistic approach to research can offer new perspectives of children’s experience of their ECEC setting. My approach is activated through a posthuman ethico-aesthetic paradigm which embraces complexity and difference as an ethical imperative. Posthuman perspectives of children and childhood are firmly rooted in Froebelian principles of interconnectedness between all things, both living and non-living, human and the more-than human. I propose that this perspective, through arts-based approaches to research, exposes the potential and significance of art in education and presents a timely philosophical and empirical approach for Irish ECEC research.

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