

**The Early
Development of
Drawing
Dan China**

DRAWING





Basic Scribbles

These are essentially spontaneous giving immediate pleasure in the movement and marks being made. They can be classified according to line direction, quality and position. Initially scribbling is simply mechanical and does not require visual guidance. Later as the child gains eye control placement patterns emerge as scribble is positioned within the edges of the paper.



Shapes

This leads to more deliberate mark making in which marks are made individually and in combination. Simple dashes, dots, short lines and scribbles are made spontaneously and without deliberation or intention. Kellogg refers to emergent diagram shapes and diagrams which will be gradually elaborated into combines or units of two or more diagrams.



Designs

Designs are combines and other types of mark making in which a roving line is drawn, enclosing space but still without deliberation or intention. This characterises what Kellogg refers to as the design stage.



Discovery of the oval

The discovery of the oval marks the end of the first stage of development. The child first recognises and then repeats at will the basic oval shape. The child is thus able to control and predict the outcome of this mark making activity. Once this mark becomes deliberate and recognisable the child can begin to use it in symbolic play. The oval is believed to be a particularly significant shape imbued with considerable psychological relevance by Jung, Goodnow, Kellogg and others.



Radial

The transition from a simple recognisable mark to a symbol begins as the child deliberately places lines around the perimeter of the oval and begins to use it as a symbol.



Sun Head

Here the oval becomes a symbol, usually of "me" or "mummy". The radial lines are reduced to become legs and sometimes arms. The child is in control of a symbol, which is used to explore and express the child's developing understanding of her relationship with the world around her.



Hairpin man

In these drawings the sunhead becomes a more specific symbol legs are elongated and further markings are made to the face and top of the head.

Closed hairpin figure

Here a line is used to enclose the body. It now provides opportunities to enrich the symbol and to perceive and record details of clothes colours and hair.

Figures

The body and limbs are gradual drawn as separate shapes with a given relationship between the parts and the whole. This provides opportunities to distinguish figures and to extend their symbolic range.



Enclosed spaces

Alongside the early sun head figures simple shapes are enclosed and used as place symbols, usually houses. Sometimes these shapes are confused with faces or simple scribbles. Throughout these stages children will move backwards and forwards often exhibiting several different developmental stages in the same drawing.



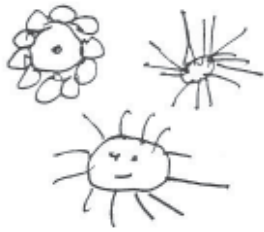
Early house

In these drawings the addition of elementary windows and doors creates an understandable symbol of a house.



Houses

Houses are important complementary symbols for the figure they provide a sense of place and enable the child to consider the relationship of their figures to their environment.



Flowers and suns

The early oval symbol becomes significant again as flower and sun symbols as the child elaborates the place within which his figures reside. These also provide devices that can be used to explore the sensual nature of paint and colour.



Trees

Trees develop from the simple sun/flower shapes and are often used to enrich the symbolic landscape by further describing the place inhabited by the child's figures.

Strip sky and strip ground

Following on from the house and the tree as symbols of place the strip of sky and of the ground further describe the place in which the figures exist. They also start to define the edges of the space and of the paper.

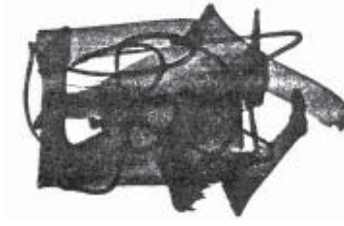


Notes

As children are using these drawings symbolically it is unnecessary and possibly counterproductive to seek to 'improve' them or to move children through stages by referring to their pictures after they have been produced (by then the game is over). By and large the pictures should be received and valued with enthusiasm as the outcome of the child's imaginative play.

Children can, however, be encouraged to extend and enrich this symbolic activity by stimulating their interest, perception and imagination before the drawing or pointing activity. By looking at, touching and talking about their dress, the trees and flowers rather than their pictures. In this way they will find the further detail they need as their imagination requires.

It may not be appropriate to point out to the child that the sky does not touch the skyline in her picture, but it is valuable to look at and talk about the sky and to look at and talk about Other pictures of the sky before she makes her own picture.



Sludge and custard

The first attempts at painting simply get paint onto the paper and moved around with the brush.



Patches

The next phase is seen in an attempt to keep the colours separate on the page. It results in patches of colour. These patches will gradually be placed with greater precision as the child gains mastery of her materials. Patterns such as stripes and Rags begin to appear. These pictures consist only of colour and shape they are abstract and spontaneous.



Colour on colour

Having gained the ability to place colour on a page the next stage is seen as the child places colour on colour exploring the richness and texture of paint and colour.

Sun head

As with drawing materials the child begins to recognise and then use the oval sun head as a symbol. At this stage the child needs a human figure symbol most of all; nearly all of her early experiences have to do with people.



Notes

The two main areas of early child art one linear and one based on colour are perceived by some to correspond with two primary characteristics of art. On the one hand there is the area of symbolism and meaning through signs and codes, on the other the sensuous pleasure to be had from the purely formal elements of colour, shape, texture. This debate about the relationship and relative importance of form and content appears again and again in discussion about art at every level.