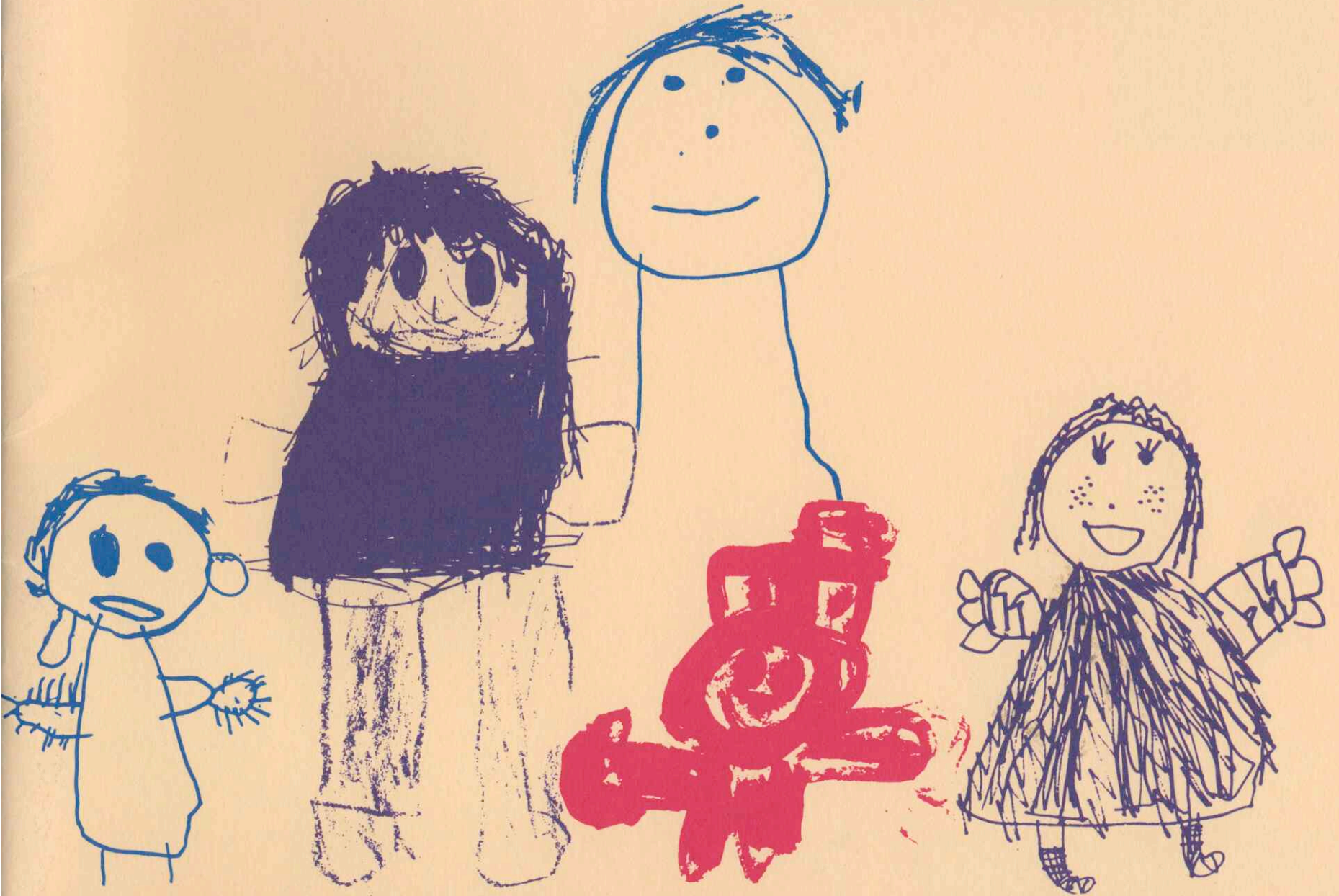
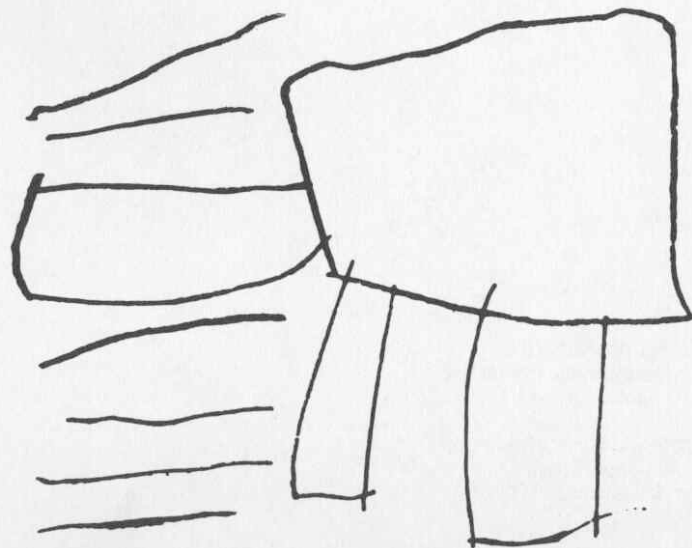


# Children's Art

Exploring Childhood  
Seeing Development



# Children's Art



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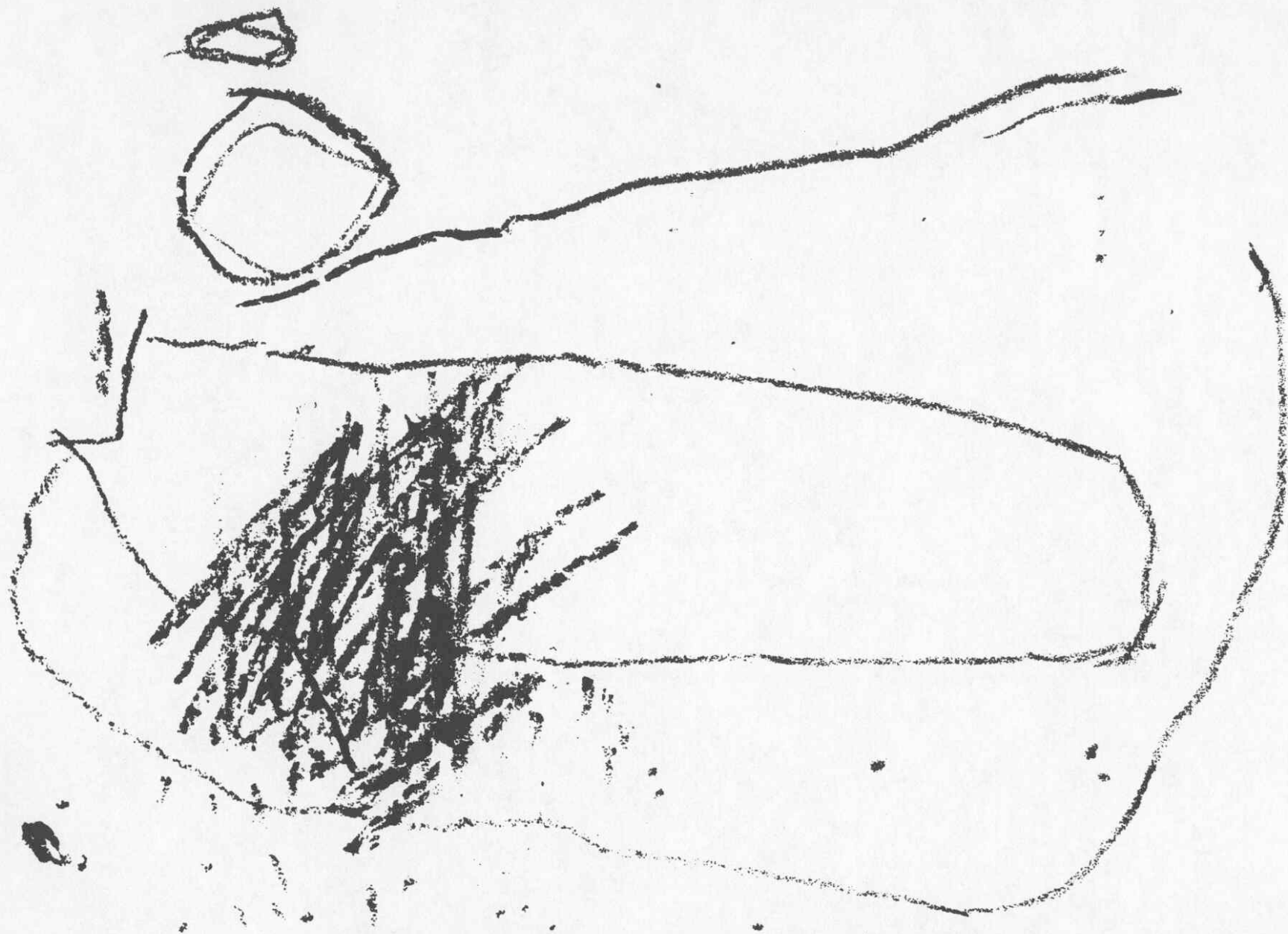
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*"No matter what children draw, they make self portraits—children's drawings picture what they can do with their hands and their tools, some of what is on their minds, much of what they understand or feel about their world and themselves at that moment."*

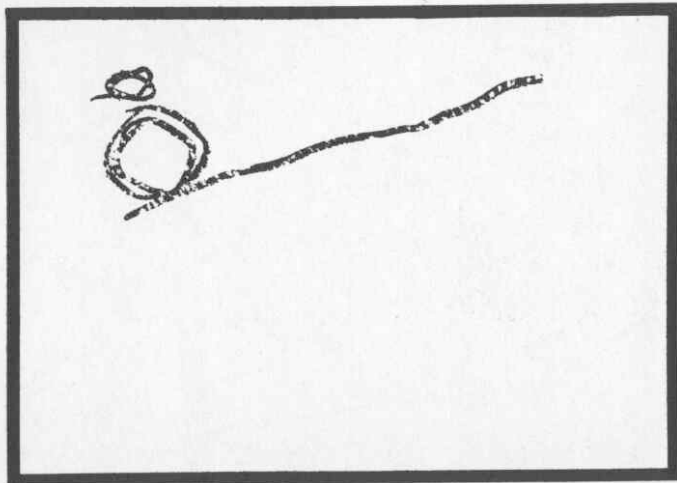


# What's in a Picture?

## Making a Drawing

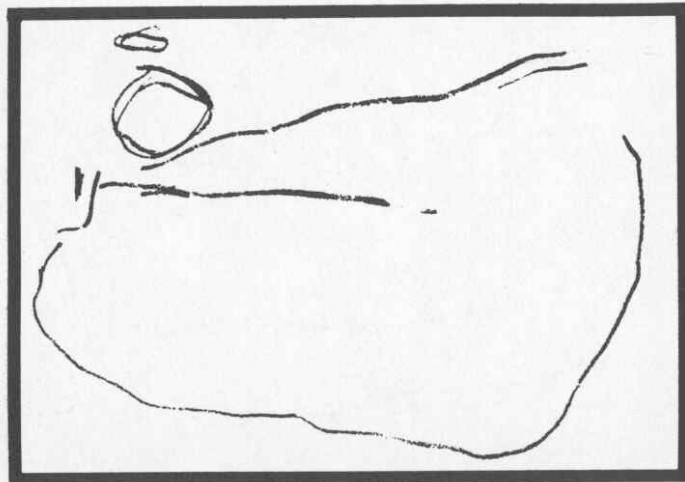
Toni (aged 15): Is that your picture?

Greg (4): Yeah. It's got two dinosaurs fighting. See? They're biting each other all up. They're going round and round and then they're going to crash and fall down.



The colored lines in Greg's picture all "bump" into one another. The lines seem tangled and messy. Where are the two dinosaurs he insists are there? No amount of searching will uncover the heads and tails of Greg's dinosaurs. His drawing isn't a picture of two big animals struggling. It is much more a kind of play in which Greg explores his own abilities, ideas, and feelings.

What was going on while the drawing was being made? Looking closely at Greg while he is drawing his "dinosaurs" suggests what the experience of drawing may be like for the young child:



Greg is sitting with Clark, another four-year-old. They are drinking juice.

"I'm going to go make a picture," Clark announces.

"Me, too," Greg says. "I want to, too."

Slowly they walk to the art table. Clark grabs paper off the shelf and picks up a handful of crayons. Greg does just the same.

Clark says, "I'm going to make a man. A fat man."

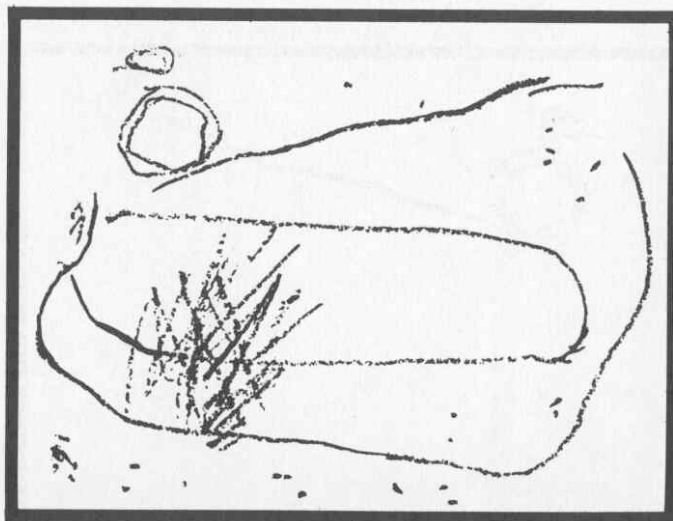
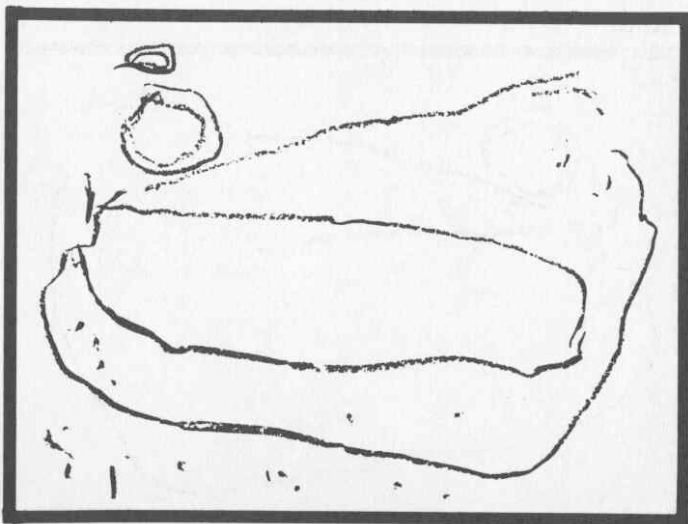
"Me, too," Greg chimes in. "A big, big, fat, fat man."

Greg watches as Clark makes one big circle, then a smaller one. He does the same. "The head, the body . . . no . . . the body, then the little head . . . two circles . . . two circles could make a snowman. There," Greg says. He starts to put the crayon down. "No, he needs a seat. The line goes here. All across." Greg pushes the crayon line steadily across his paper, pressing harder and harder. "Road coming, road coming. Bang, bang, bang, here I come. I'm a big truck on the road. Clang,

clang, clang. Down the road." He comes to the edge of the paper and has to turn the corner. "Clang, clang, clang. Down the road, round the corner." He turns the bottom corner of his paper. "Faster, faster." He is using his crayon as if it were a small toy truck. He pushes really hard and it snaps in two. "Hey, look, my crayon broke. I got two pieces." He pushes them with his finger tip and they roll several inches. "Two wheels for my truck." He pushes them along with his hand, then flicks them with his finger. "Hey, cars on my road. They can be racing. Cars go fast. They can run over people or dogs. My dog was runned over. Michael's cat, too. We don't have a new dog . . . these cars are going to crash." Greg makes all kinds of explosion noises, and begins to bang his paper with the crayon. The crayon is orange and the bright dots catch his attention. He begins to make big up-and-down motions with his crayon. "I'm making a fire. What are you making, Clark? What do you got?"

"A dinosaur," Clark replies.

"Me, too," Greg says. "A dinosaur and a fire. No, two dinosaurs fighting. Do you want to see?"





Greg's drawing may look like a tangle of lines. But the experience of making the drawing may be a chance for Greg:

- to show his friendship for Clark,
- to play at being as powerful and fast as a big truck,
- to express his amazement or fear about cars and accidents, or hurt at losing a pet,
- to explore how marks and colors can be combined to show ideas and feelings,
- to grow in his ability to use tools and materials,
- to create a drawing that reflects back to him all these efforts.

## Why Watch Children Draw?

During the few minutes of drawing, children may struggle with materials, finding out that wet paints run and mix, chalks smear, crayons break. They may discover shapes or colors that make them remember certain feelings or experiences. Paints and brushes may become extensions of a child's body, banging and splattering out excitement or anger.

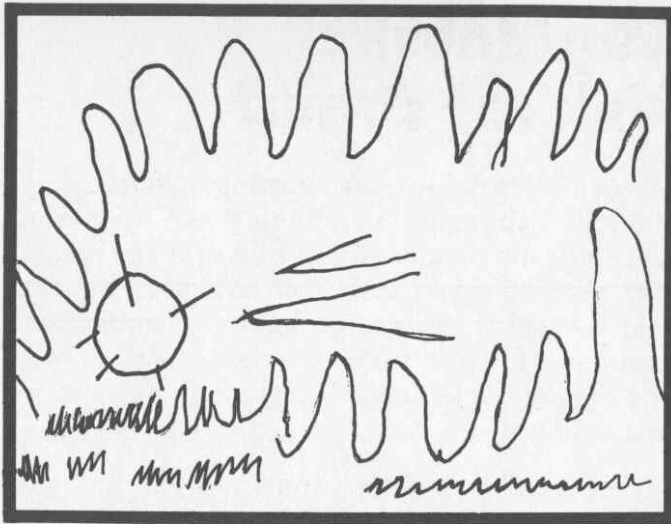
Watching children as they draw lets you find out about:

individual children—what they can do, what matters to them, what they are trying to learn, how they go about learning;

the experience of painting or drawing—what it can mean for each child, what skills it requires, what it can teach.

Following are several observations of children drawing. Read them carefully and look at what the children draw.

What can you tell about each child? about what this experience might mean to each child?



## Ruthie (3 1/2 years old)

Ruthie's teacher gives Ruthie two pencils, a green pen, and several sheets of white paper. She starts drawing. She makes a few short lines with the pencil, quickly and without much attention. She takes the green pen and moves it back and forth, trying to get the ink to come out. Finally it comes. She moves the pen back and forth, back and forth.

Ruthie is really happy about this. She makes bigger and bigger motions with her hand, big green arcs that cross the paper like rainbows, big zig-zags. She calls the shorter lines "grass." She points to a spot and says, "I'll make a sun."

Then she starts making more green zig-zags along the bottom of the paper. She laughs and does it again, faster, slipping the pen off the paper and laughing again.

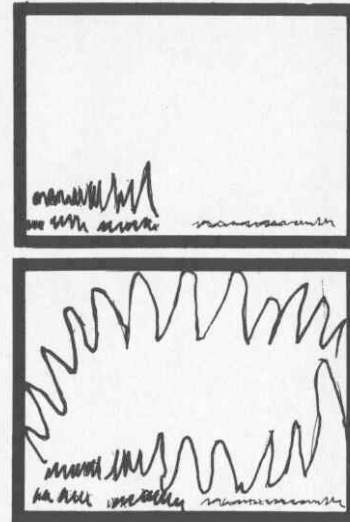
Now she makes a long line right in the middle of the paper, and another line coming together with the first line like a "V." She says, "This is a building." Then she draws a smaller "V" and says, "This is another little building."

### *Thinking about Ruthie's Drawing:*

Why should being able to work a pen, and pushing the pen off the edge of the paper, be enjoyable and funny?

Do you think Ruthie planned to make grass? Why?

At three and a half, Ruthie surely knows what a building looks like. How can she call those v-shapes "buildings"?



## Tina (4 years old)



Tina seems restless and unsettled. She wanders over to the easel and puts on an apron without bothering to tie it up. She picks up a brush and stirs it round and round in the cup of black paint. She moves it up and down, up and down, for a long time before she brings it to the paper.



Tina makes a big wet spot of black paint. It drips, and Tina looks upset. She makes another, bigger spot to try and cover up the drips. She makes the spot bigger and bigger. She paints in two short legs. Tina fills her brush again and paints what look like wings on the big spot. She looks at them carefully and begins to fill them in. The paint spills over the edges of the shapes and drips some more. Tina scrubs harder and harder at these drips. The paper becomes one big black mess. Tina studies her painting. Taking more black paint she fills in every inch of white space. Carefully, she lifts her painting off the easel. On her way to set the painting to dry, she meets Ms. R.

“What did you paint?” Ms. R. asks.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing at all?” says Ms. R.

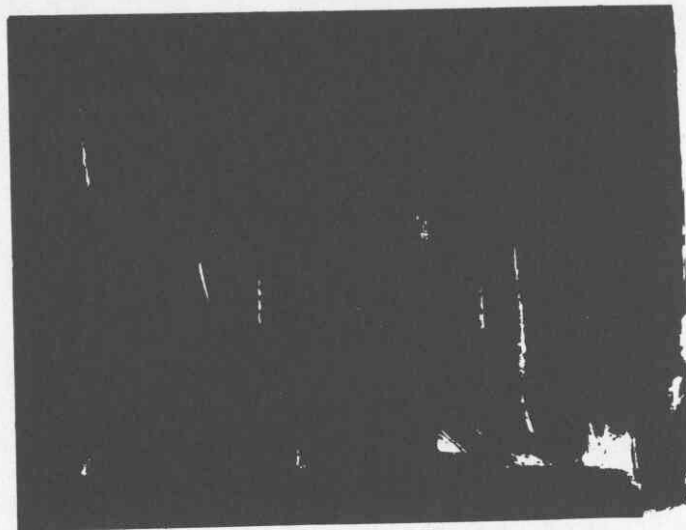
“The dark,” Tina replies.

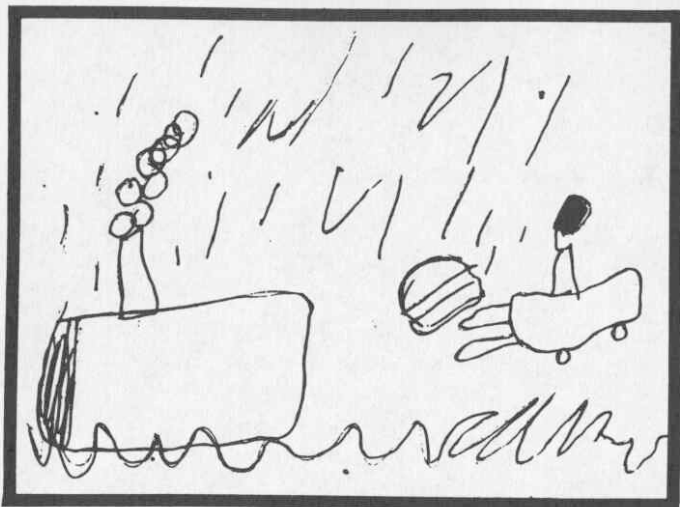
### *Thinking about Tina's Painting:*

How does the paint's **spilling and dripping** change Tina's painting?

Why do you think Tina **carefully painted** in every inch?

How do you think Tina felt about her painting of “the dark”?





## Guy (5 years old)

Guy sees an older boy, Eric, making a drawing. He runs over to watch. "I want to, I want to draw," he says. He squats down right in front of Eric and starts drawing. He is excited. Whenever Eric makes a line so does Guy. But this copying doesn't hold his attention, so he throws away the paper and grabs a new one.

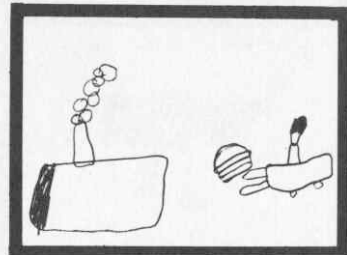
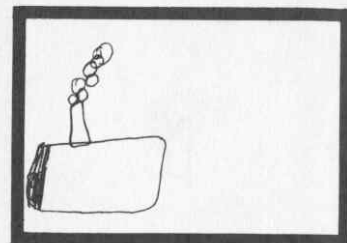
"This is going to be a picture of last summer. I can draw everything. The water and the boats and the guys fishing and everything. All that stuff." Guy draws a large square, then adds on a small square and a long line of circles. "This is the boat." He colors in the back of the boat and says, "This is where we can go in if it gets cold." He makes another, smaller boat-shape. "And this is the guy who owns the boat and he is rowing back to dump the fish." With that he adds two long shapes for oars, the body of a person in the boat, and two legs under the boat. "Sometimes there is a storm. It gets all rough. Like this." Guy makes a "storm" of marks, banging his pencil down on the paper.

### *Thinking about Guy's Drawing:*

Why do you think copying doesn't hold Guy's attention?

Guy's drawing looks quite different from what he saw during his summer vacation. The rowboat isn't in the water, the fisherman's legs show underneath the boat, the big boat looks more like a house. Why isn't Guy bothered? What do you think Guy is doing through drawing?

Why might Guy have wanted to draw the storm?

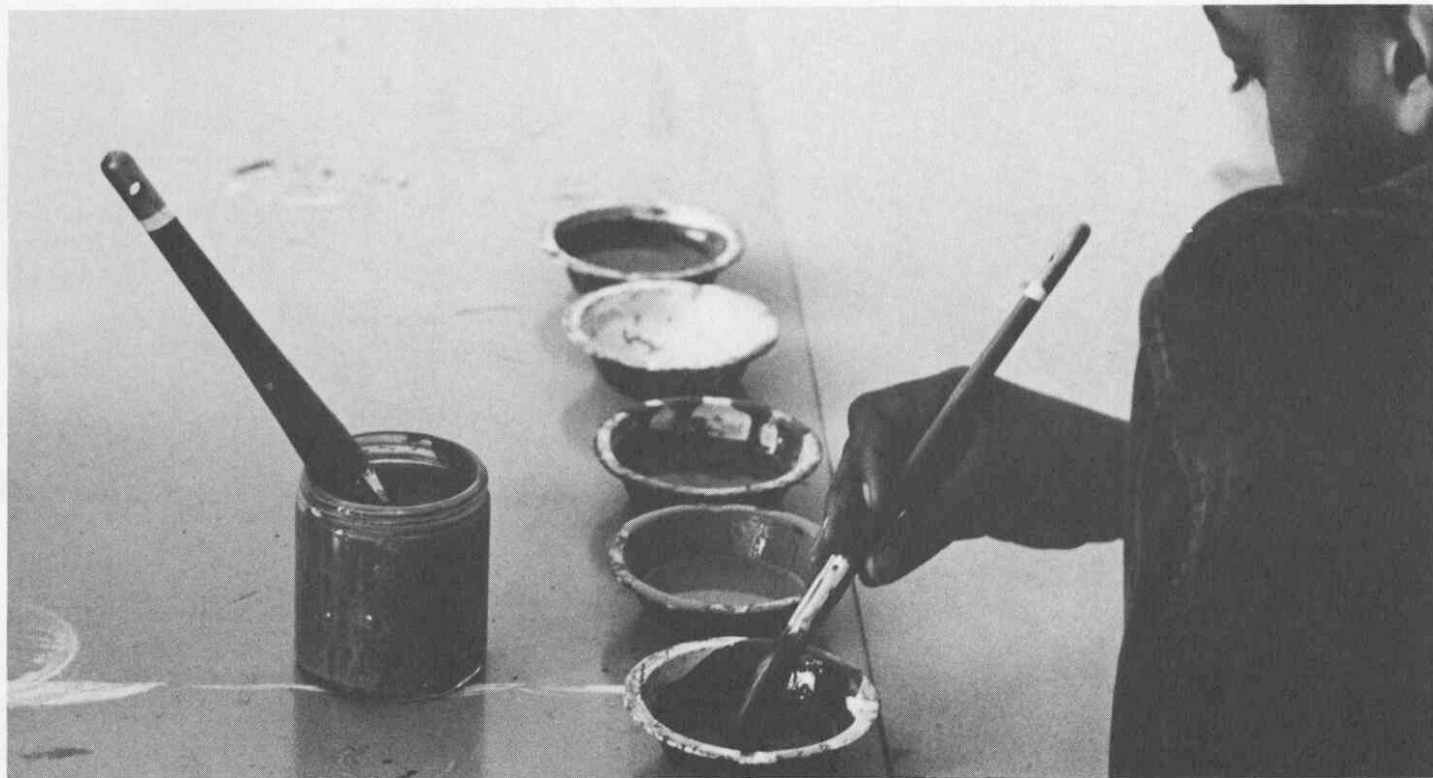




# What Drawing Offers a Child

Not all children rush to easels. Some do not want to paint what they feel or have learned. There are children who are worried by the messiness of paints, or angered by the drips and splashes. Some children are happier building, dancing, or talking about what matters to them. Moreover, there are children who hesitate to draw because they have already been made to feel that they "can't make it look right."

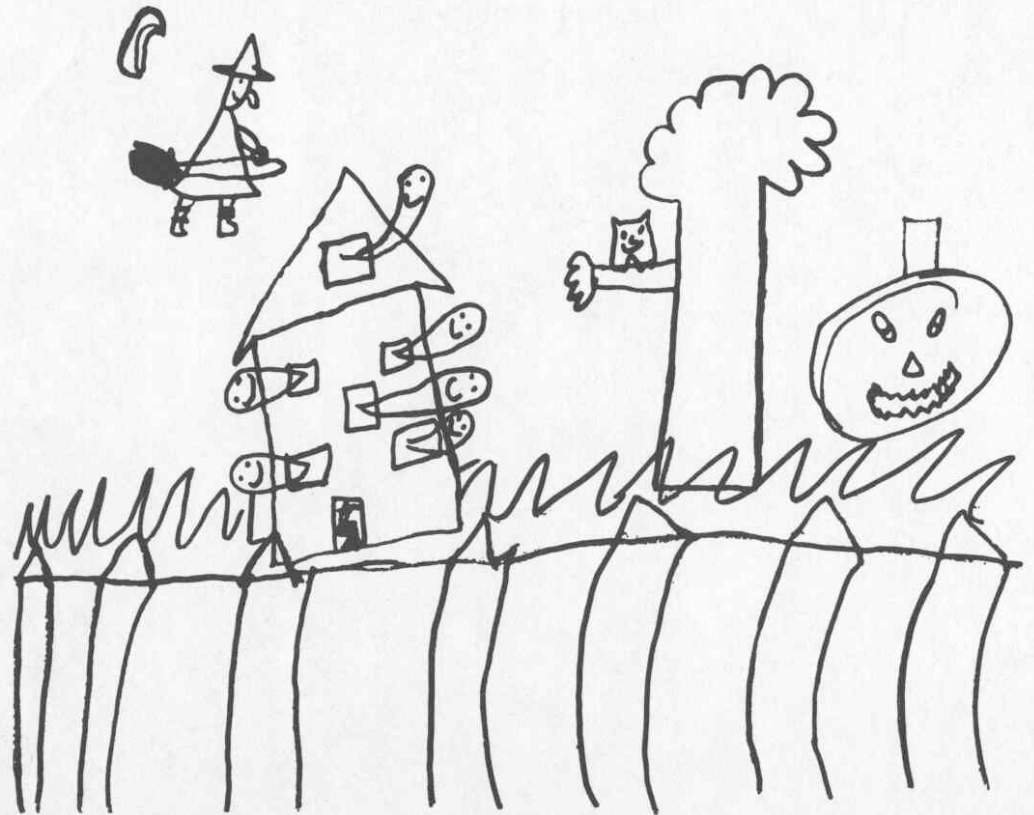
But when a child dips freely into the cups of colors he or she wins a whole new way of self-expression. Like play, drawing offers the child many opportunities.



**While drawing a child can remake experience.**

After her first Halloween, Lila stepped up to the easel. Using black paint to make a heavy outline, she drew a huge witch who nearly filled her paper. She “dotted” in two eyes, made a big nose, and drew a dark line of a mouth. Lila “scrubbed” the witch’s clothes black and filled the space around the figure with wild twisting lines. Almost done, Lila returned to her witch’s face. Carefully, she went over the eyes and the long pointed nose, just as she had painted them originally. When she came to the mouth, Lila filled her brush and painted on a grin wide enough to make her witch look like the funniest clown ever: through drawing, Lila may have “edited” her experience, making her witch almost—but not quite—terrifying.

*How might drawing a ghost make a ghost less frightening?*



**Drawing allows children to clarify what they know and feel.**

Within the safe and reassuring boundaries of the paper, children can gain some measure of control over the vague but powerful forces that govern their life and world. The mysterious becomes familiar, reality simpler and more concrete, feelings more exactly expressed. Fantasy is explored and may be recognized. In the act of creating, children uncover thoughts and feelings. With each choice—what colors, what shapes, what to make big and what small, whether to bang, swish, or scrub—children become more certain what they know, feel, and think.

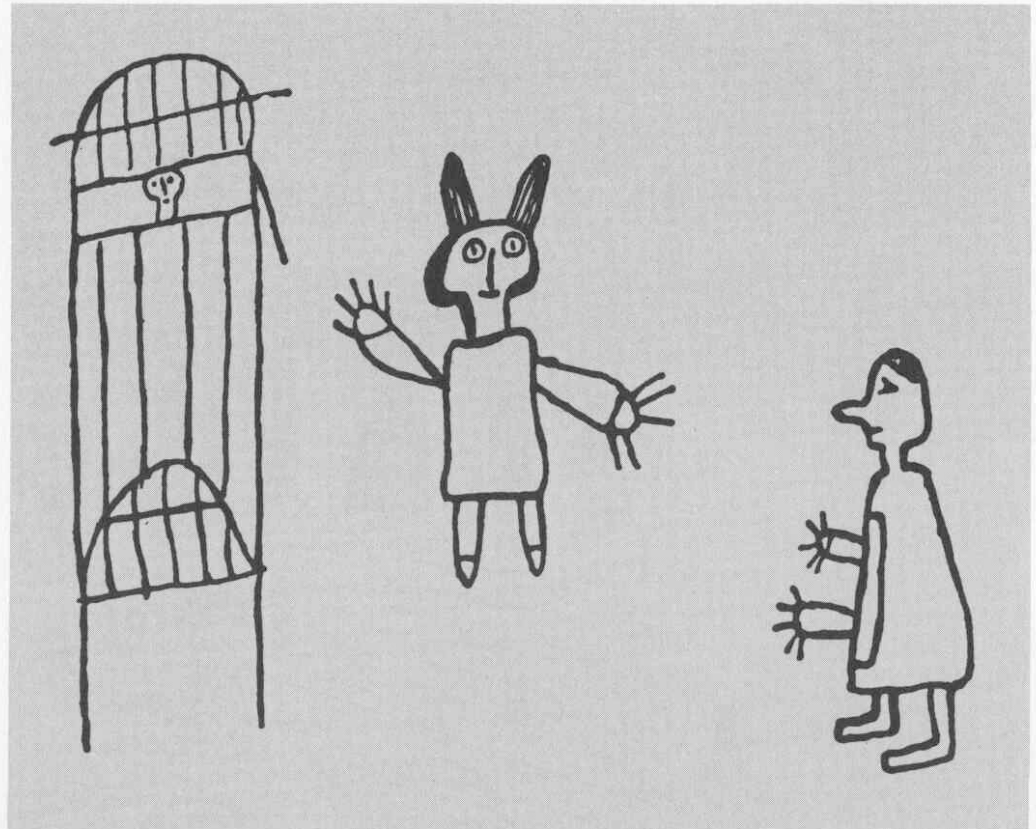
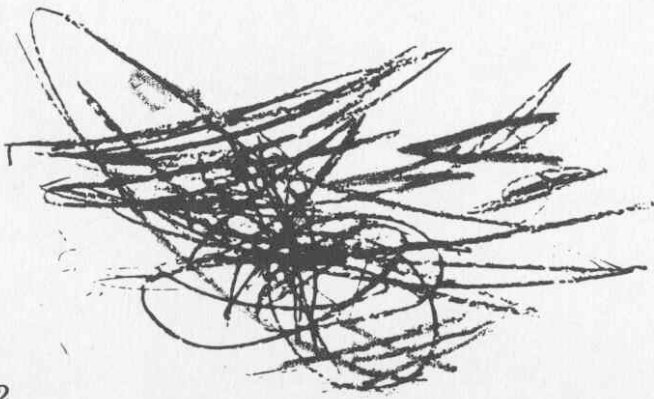
*How has this child expressed the relation between families and their houses?*



**Painting may take up where words fail.**

All human beings experience feelings so strong and complex that they cannot find words to express them. Sometimes, they cannot even identify exactly what those feelings are. This inability to speak about emotions can be deeply frustrating. How much more frequent and intense such an experience must be for a child who is still learning to speak. Often we are deceived. If the child can say, "I am mad" or "I feel good," we tend to think language has become an adequate mirror for that child's feelings. But what the child may still be unable to put into words is *why* he or she feels angry or happy, what has caused the feeling, and why he or she is acting in a particular way.

At times like these, playing, creating, and moving can matter a great deal to a child. Feelings that cannot be squeezed into words may rush out in a monster play, an exuberant outdoor chase, or furious banging and splattering on a piece of paper.



*Why might a child make a drawing about a dream?*

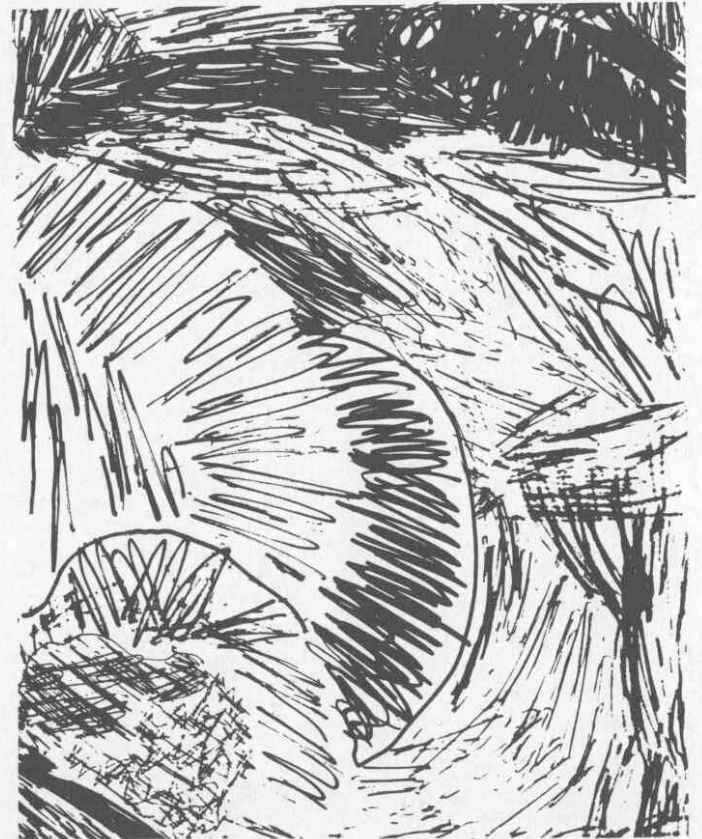
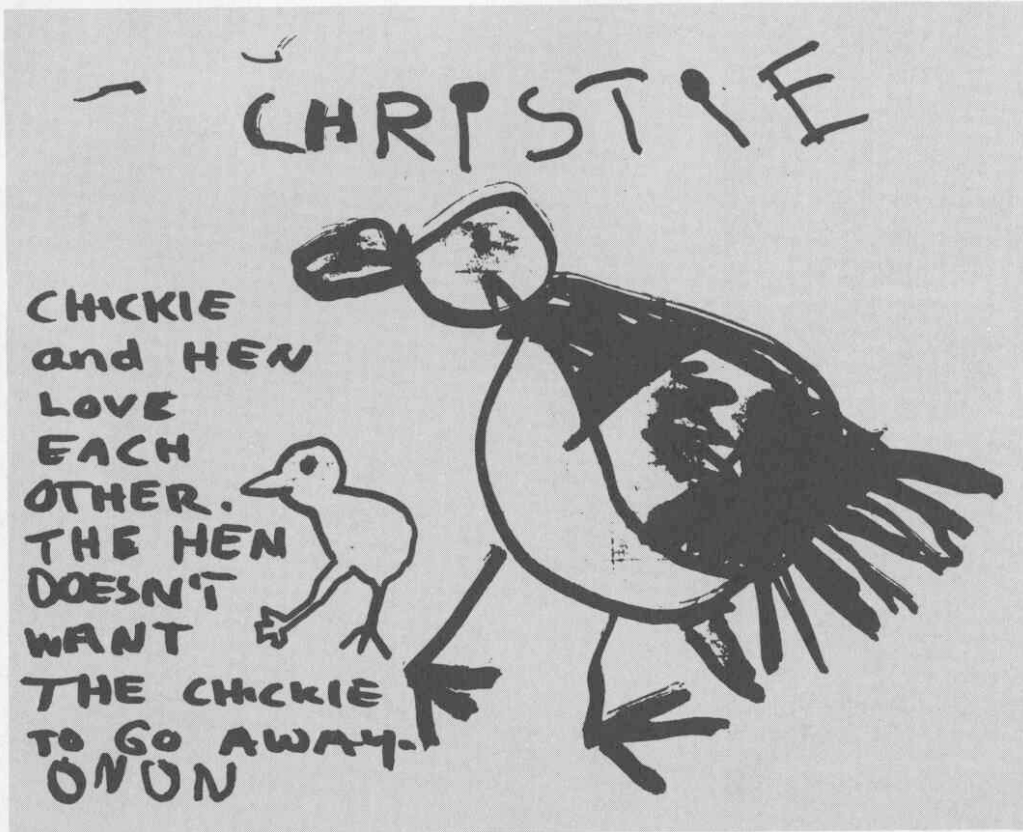


### A child "owns" his or her drawing.

Even the youngest child will scrub away at a painting, wearing holes in it. Children may crowd around the easels and argue over whose turn comes next. Why? In part, drawing offers children release from imposed rules, such as, "You can only have one cookie," "This is the way to hold a pencil," or "Here is the way you make a three." Brushes, paints, and crayons become their own tools. They can take colors in any order, start anywhere on the paper, and bang, dab, splatter, or scrub freely. They can draw as many cookies as they want, hold the brush backwards, or make a three that "lies down." Ownership is clear—the drawing is "mine."

### A drawing "stays."

Unlike words, a game, or a block tower that is built, taken apart, and put away, a drawing stays. When the brushes are laid down and the painting lifted off the easel, the child looks at it and sees an image of what he or she is able to do. Because it "stays," a painting can be showed to others, given as a gift, compared to a friend's. Eventually it won't matter anymore. It may be left crumpled in a corner or on a table, and the child may not even recognize it. But it will have "stayed" long enough for the child to have looked at it and said, "I did all this."



# Observing Through Film: "Racing Cars"

Enroue draws racing cars all the time, with pencils, markers, or crayons. When this film was being made—just before the shooting started—Enroue announced, "I'm going to make a racing car. Number 5." He then proceeded to try to do with paints what he had done often with pencils and crayons.

Before you watch the film, look over the questions on pages 16-17. These will give you some sense of how to look for information in the film. Then, as you watch, try to answer these questions:

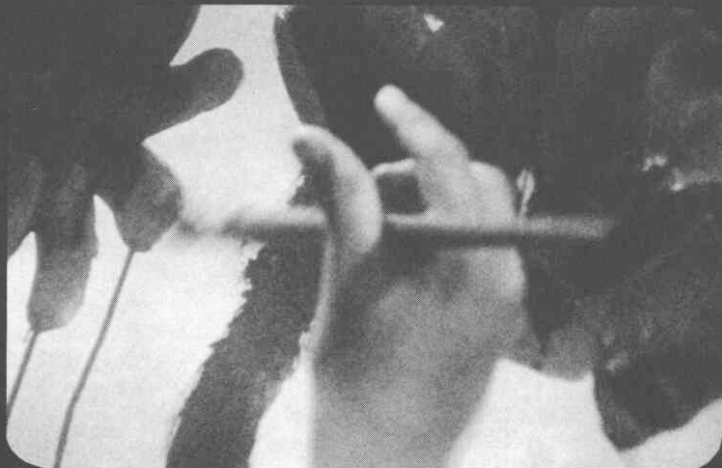
What happens for Enroue as he paints his racing cars?

How does it happen?

What do you know about Enroue from watching him paint?

What do you think this painting offers or demands from Enroue?

How can you tell?



# Children and You

## Observing at a Fieldsite

There are several ways to observe children as they draw. You don't need to stand over them with pencil and pad in hand. Joining them as they work will teach you a great deal.

Ask to work in the art area. If you are there—setting out materials, mixing paints, ready to put on painting aprons—you will have the chance to watch carefully those children who stop by.

Offer children a new material to work with. Mix some unusual colors—purple, blue-green, pink. Set out extra large sheets of drawing paper, or paper in different colors. Show children what there is to work with; several will take up your invitation.

Create a new situation. Make a “giant” picture with lots of children all working

together on a very long sheet of paper. Ask two friends to make a picture together. Invite children to make “picture-letters” for each other or for someone they like.

With children old enough to enjoy making pictures of people and events, read a new story almost to the end and then ask them to draw their favorite character, the “best” part, or their own ending.

Before you observe, become familiar with the questions on the following two pages. They will give you ideas of what to look for. Work with children in a friendly and comfortable way: help them, talk with them, observe what they do, listen to what they say. Afterward, record your observations and thoughts in your journal. Use the questions to help you organize your notes. Ask the children if you may keep their drawings until you have had a chance to share them with your class.

# Analyzing What You See

After each question on the facing chart, samples are given of the kind of specific information you might look for when watching children draw.

## What Happens?

*What brings the child to use the materials?*

following a friend? attracted by a new material?  
stopping by just to look? to make something his  
or her own? to show off?

*How does a child get started?*

by playing with the materials? asking for a sug-  
gestion? "jumping right in"?

*What happens as the child works?*

What shapes or marks does he or she  
make—lines, dots, circles, animals, houses, cars?  
What colors does the child use? In what different  
ways does the child use the brush or crayons—to  
bang, to scrub, to make thick and thin lines? Do  
accidents occur? How does the child handle  
them? (Is the child frustrated? Does he or she ig-  
nore them?) Does the child experiment with ma-  
terials? with his or her abilities? Does the child  
try making circles of different sizes? the same  
shape in different colors? different facial expres-  
sions? Does he or she try drawing with one hand,  
then the other?

*When is the child finished?*

when the paper is full? when a friend calls? when  
the child has made what he or she set out to  
make? when a teacher or student says, "Time's  
up?"

*What does the child do with the  
finished drawing?*

ask to hang it up? show it to the teacher? throw it  
away? run off and forget it? take it home?



## How Does It Happen?

### *How does the child paint?*

quickly and surely? carefully and slowly? without much interest?

### *What might the child be feeling?*

pleasure from what he or she can do? frustration from not being able to do what he or she wants to do? eagerness to re-enact a favorite event or picture a favorite person? enjoyment from making something crazy or funny or new? power from making something scary, big, or wild that he or she can control with a stroke of the pencil or brush?

## How Can You Tell?

### *Facial expressions*

Does the child look pleased? busy? frustrated? How does the child's expression change?

### *Ways of moving*

Does the child look tense or relaxed, uninterested or excited? How does he or she hold the brush—tightly as if it were hard work, or loosely as if the child didn't really want to work with it? What are the child's motions like? excited? hesitating?

### *Attention*

Where is the child's attention? Does the picture hold it throughout? If not, when does it begin to wander?

### *Talking*

Does the child announce what he or she wants to do? What does the child say? While drawing, does the child comment on what is happening in the picture? Does he or she say anything when the picture is finished?

# Your Observations

Using your journal notes for reference, tell the class about some experience you have had with children and art that relates to one of the questions below.

Does it allow a child to express his or her feelings and ideas?

verbally?  
with the materials?  
with his or her body?

What materials does he or she use?

how do they affect what the child does?  
how are they used?  
are they appropriate?

What does it say about young children?

what still challenges them?  
what do they enjoy? why?  
what can they already do?

Watching a  
Child Draw



What is involved in the process?

is it play?  
is it to make something beautiful?  
what can a child learn?

What does it say about this particular child?

what makes it "his" or "hers"?  
what can he or she already do?  
what is still a challenge?

# The Eyedropper Experiment

Learning to draw is one example of a child's acquiring a new skill. In a young child, this learning takes place over a period of months and years.

What are the steps in acquiring a new skill?

Take an eyedropper, some blotting paper, and a cup of water with food coloring added. Fill the eyedropper and try to draw some pictures by squirting water onto the blotting paper. Afterward, get together with other students and discuss:

What did it feel like to draw with new, unfamiliar materials?

How did you "get to know" the materials?

What difficulties and frustrations did you have? How did you deal with them?

What experiments did you try? How did they turn out?

Did your experiments with one drawing teach you anything that you used in your next drawing?

When you finished, did you feel you had learned to do what you wanted to do with the materials?



Acquiring the skill of making pictures with an eyedropper and blotting paper may give you some idea of what a child goes through when learning to use a crayon, a brush, or any other new material. For the child, of course, the skill takes months and years to develop.

One way to think about what anyone, child or adult, goes through when trying to learn a new skill is to see it taking place in four steps:

getting to know the materials, finding out what they can and cannot do;

trying to create something with the materials, gaining control, learning from accidents;

recombining, putting the results of different experiments together, creating something new or closer to what you intended;

gaining more control, learning to predict the final result, knowing how to get this result, being able to use a variety of techniques or strategies.

At your field site, notice how children experiment with materials—paint, crayons, blocks, water, even toys with wheels—and invent new ways to use them. In particular, watch how very young children (around two or three years old) get to know materials and grow better at using them.



# Many Marvelous Materials

From a variety of materials—ball-point pens, felt-tipped markers, crayons, chalk, and poster paints—choose one and make a picture.

When your drawing is completed, get together with other students—preferably ones who have worked with materials different from yours—and compare your pictures. Each of you might talk about how the materials you used influenced your picture:

What differences do you see in the pictures? Which ones were caused by the materials?

Why did you choose a particular material?

Did your choice influence how you planned what to draw? (e.g., would you do the same kind of drawing with poster paints as you would with a ball-point pen?)

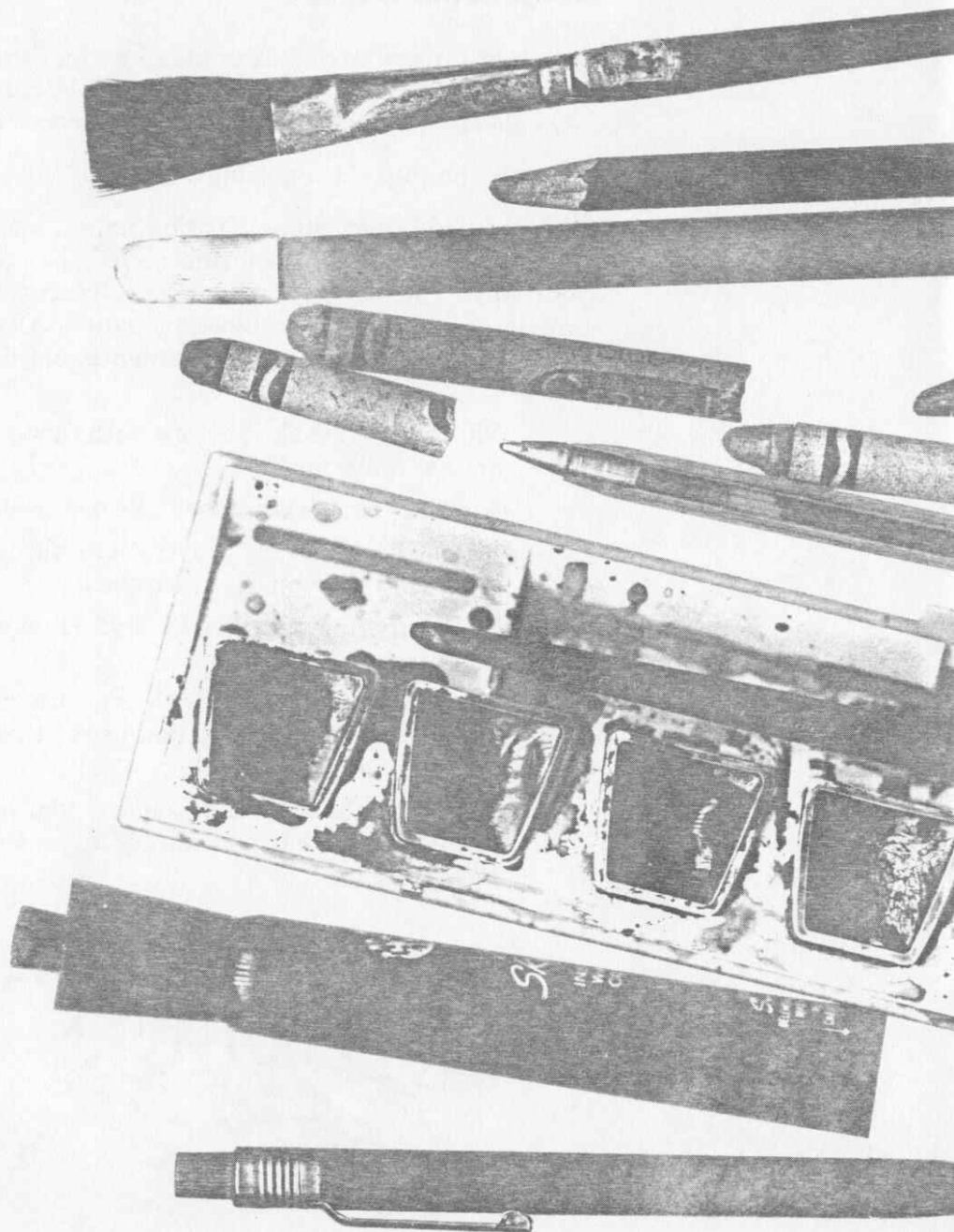
Did the materials in any way hinder what you wanted to express? Did they help? Explain.

Did they ever prevent you from showing a particular kind of detail—fine lines versus bold ones, for example?

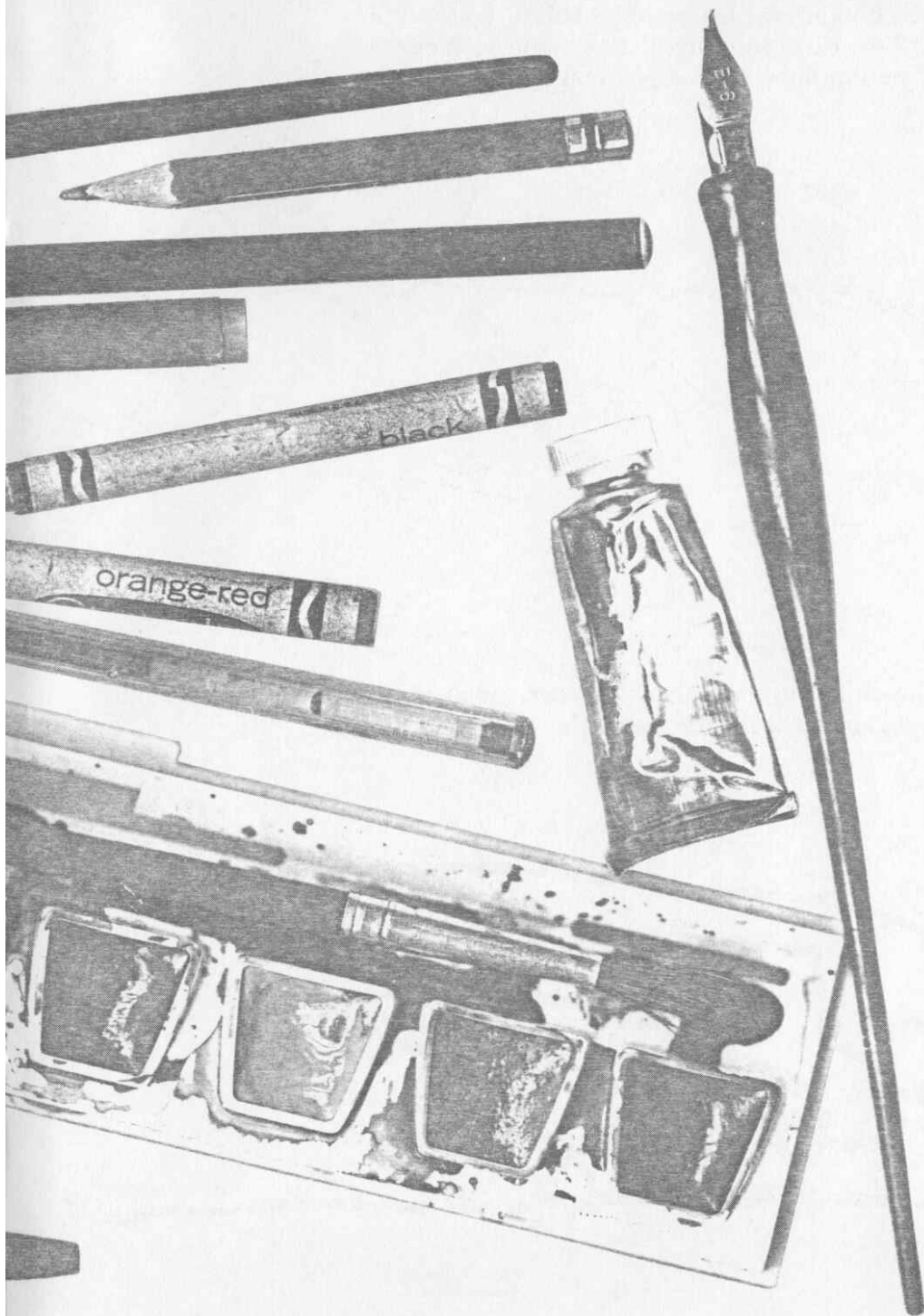
Why did you choose particular colors?

Given the chance to do the picture again, would you choose different materials? Would you use the same materials differently? Why?

After discussing the pictures individually, discuss what you as a group feel to be the possibilities and limitations of each material you have used.







Children are also influenced by the materials they work with—to a greater extent, in fact, than adults. Children have less experience with materials. To an adult, a ball-point pen is something to write with, something that makes fine lines. A child has no such set idea, and may use the pen in more ways than an adult would. After starting to draw one idea, a child looks at the marks the pen or brush is making (long, thin, wiggly lines or broad, drippy lines) and starts “playing” with the material, exploring what it can do. More readily than adults, children change their plans and ideas, figuring out how to make the materials express what they want, responding to suggestions the materials give them.

Because children are so open to materials, and are just learning to use them, the variety and kinds of materials you provide are very important. Before starting an art activity with children, think about the following questions:

Can the children handle and work with the materials comfortably? For instance, is the paper appropriate? (Using poster-paints on shiny, slippery paper or on tiny sheets of newsprint would be very discouraging for a child.)

What about variety? Have you given children a chance to work with many different materials?

What do the materials suggest to a child? (Long rolls of paper might suggest roads and cars or even whole cities. A very wet day seems to “ask” for mudpies.)

In addition to providing materials, what will be *your* function? What will you do and say?

# Listening to Children

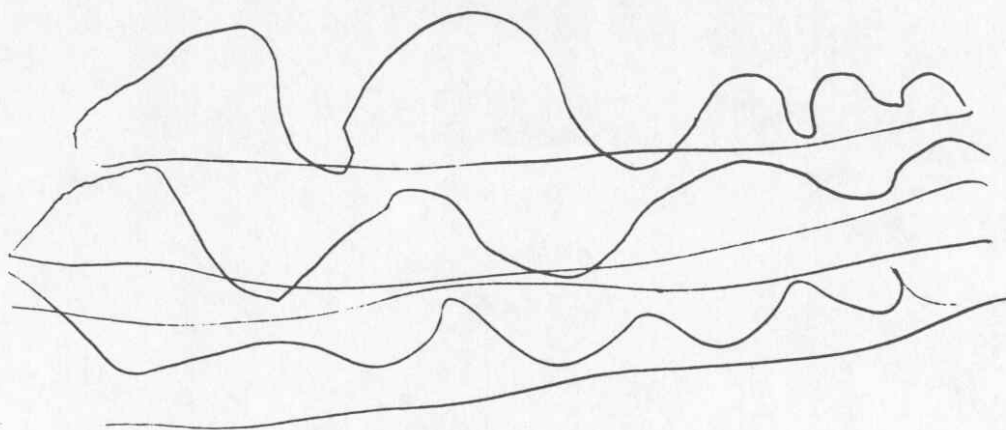
If a child wants to talk about his or her drawing, be encouraging. Talk about what the child has done, not what you would like to see. Try to mention things that may matter to the child—what he or she is drawing, how he or she is using materials. If what you say is a response to what you see, your comments can help the child see what he or she can do, and what possibilities drawing offers.

Try not to say things like, “A person doesn’t have blue hair.” Drawings are like play. They are not snapshots; they don’t have to be realistic. While drawing a blue-haired lady, a child may be trying to use a crayon in a new way, discovering how to make hair, or finding ways to turn a figure into a “lady.” He or she may not notice or care that the lines are blue.

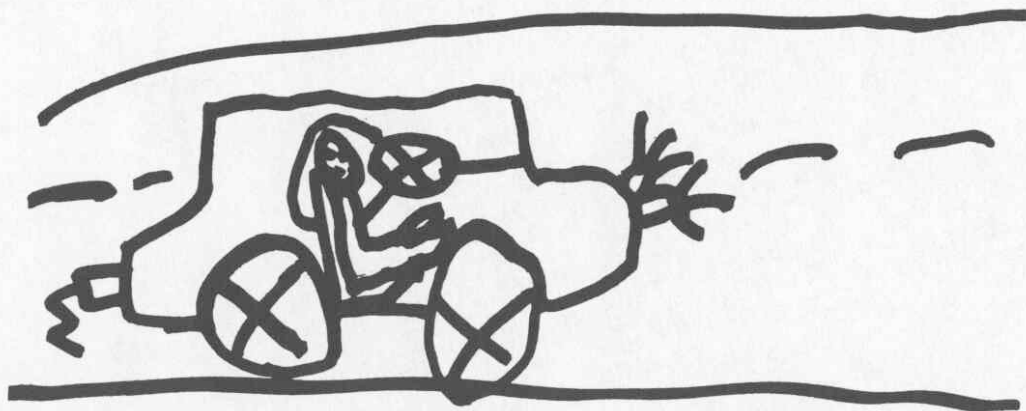
Avoid asking questions like, “Did you feel happy when you made that?” “Did you plan to do that?” Such questions may just lead the child to say things to please you.

What would you say to the children who made these drawings?

If the child says, “Do you like this?” you might say, “Yes, I like the way you’ve made both curvy and straight lines.” What else could you say?



If the child says, “This is my car,” you might say, “Those wheels are great. Can you go fast in it?”



# Ways of Looking at Children's Drawings

Although there is much to be understood in just one child's creation of a single picture, comparing the drawings of many children can tell us even more about what art offers children. Looked at carefully, children's drawings tell us about:

- the life of a particular child,
- the experience of development, which all children share.

## Individual Children and Their Drawings

Even children who are about the same age and place in development have their own style or way of drawing. Each one has a special way of putting something down on paper, a sort of personal trademark. On the next page are two groups of drawings by two children of nearly the same age.

Can you tell them apart?

How would you describe the differences?

Are there some characteristics that you can find throughout all the drawings done by one child? (Consider lines and shapes, the use of space, the feelings and ideas being explored, and what the child chooses to draw.) What seems to interest the child?

*Drawings by five-year old  
child A.*





*Drawings by five-year-old  
child B.*



# Why Do Styles Differ?

Why do children have different styles of drawing?

In thinking about this question, it might be helpful to consider the much larger issue of *personality*. Each child's personality is different from anyone else's, and this affects everything the child does, including drawing.

How does personality develop? There is no complete answer to this question. But two things that help shape a person's personality are *temperament* and *experience*. Signs of both can be seen in a child's artwork.

## Temperament

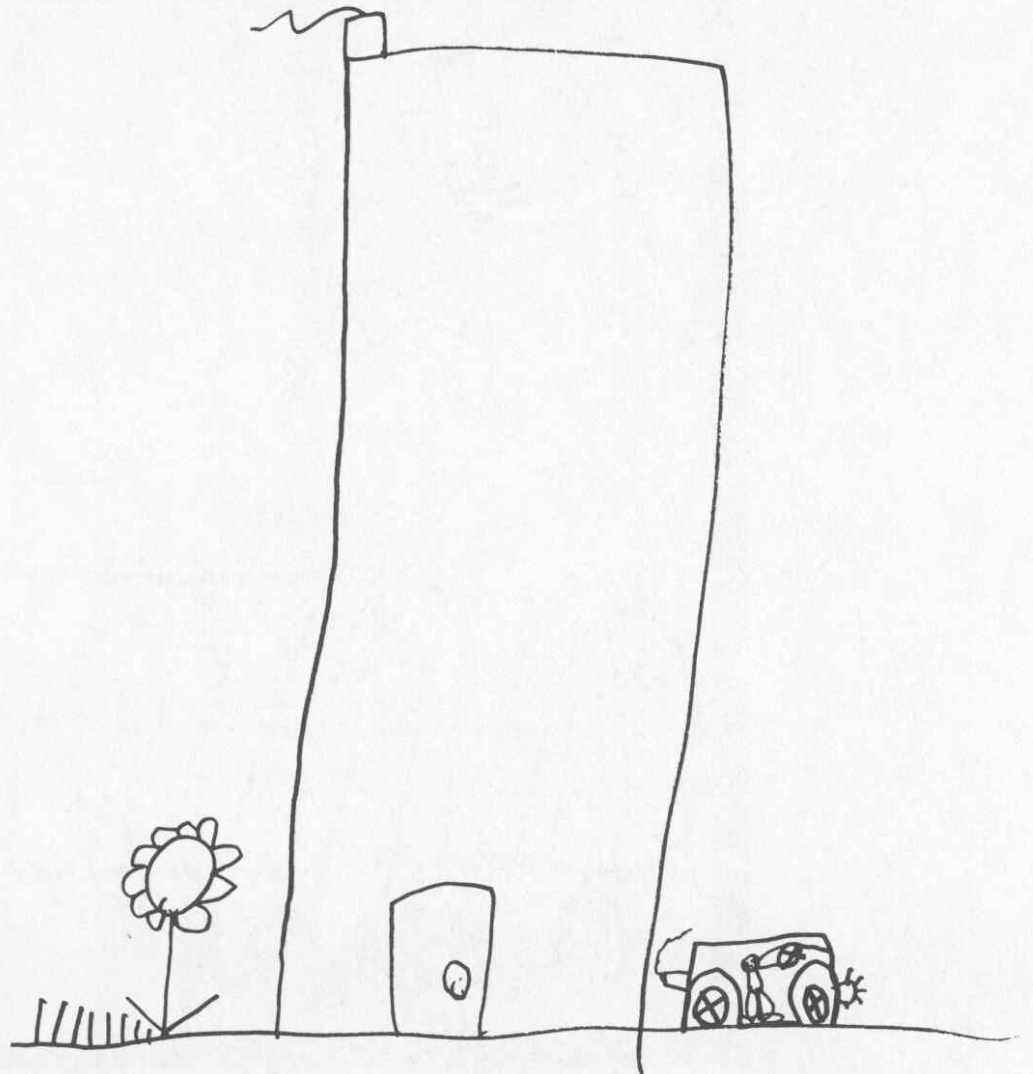
Many parents say that their children were different from one another from the moment of birth. Their first child may have been noisy, the second quiet; the first calm, the second jumpy and nervous. Every person tends to behave in a special way, which is, in part, determined by that person's particular "rhythm." Some people are fast-moving, others slower. This tendency to behave in a special way is called temperament. Because many children show what kind of temperament they have when they are born—before they have been influenced by other people—some authorities believe that temperament is inborn. They think it can be shaped by other people and by experience, but never changed completely.

A child's temperament shows up in much of what he or she does. At the easel, some children paint "nonstop"—spreading colors quickly, unmindful of drips or splatters. Others work slowly and carefully, starting over if a single line smears.

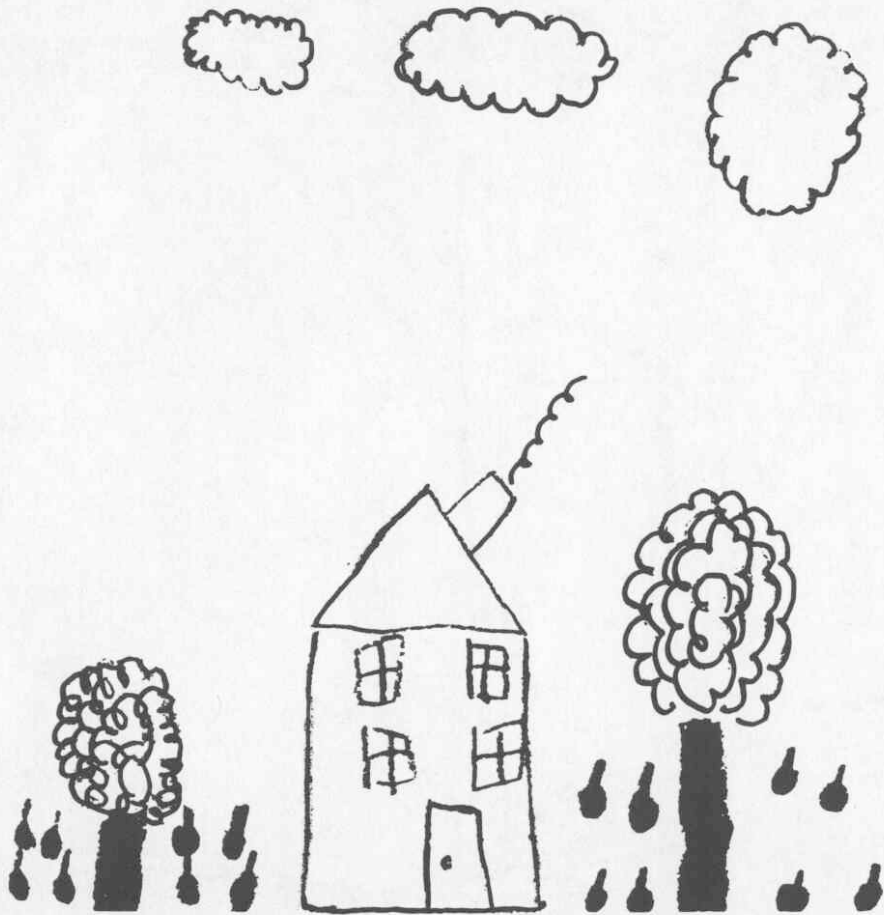
## Experience

Experience consists of a child's contact with the people and things in his or her world. Many kinds of experience influence a child's personality and style of drawing.

A child's familiar surroundings show up in his or her drawings all the time. For example, if a child living in the city is asked to draw his or her house, the drawing may look something like this:



But a child from the country might draw a house  
this way:



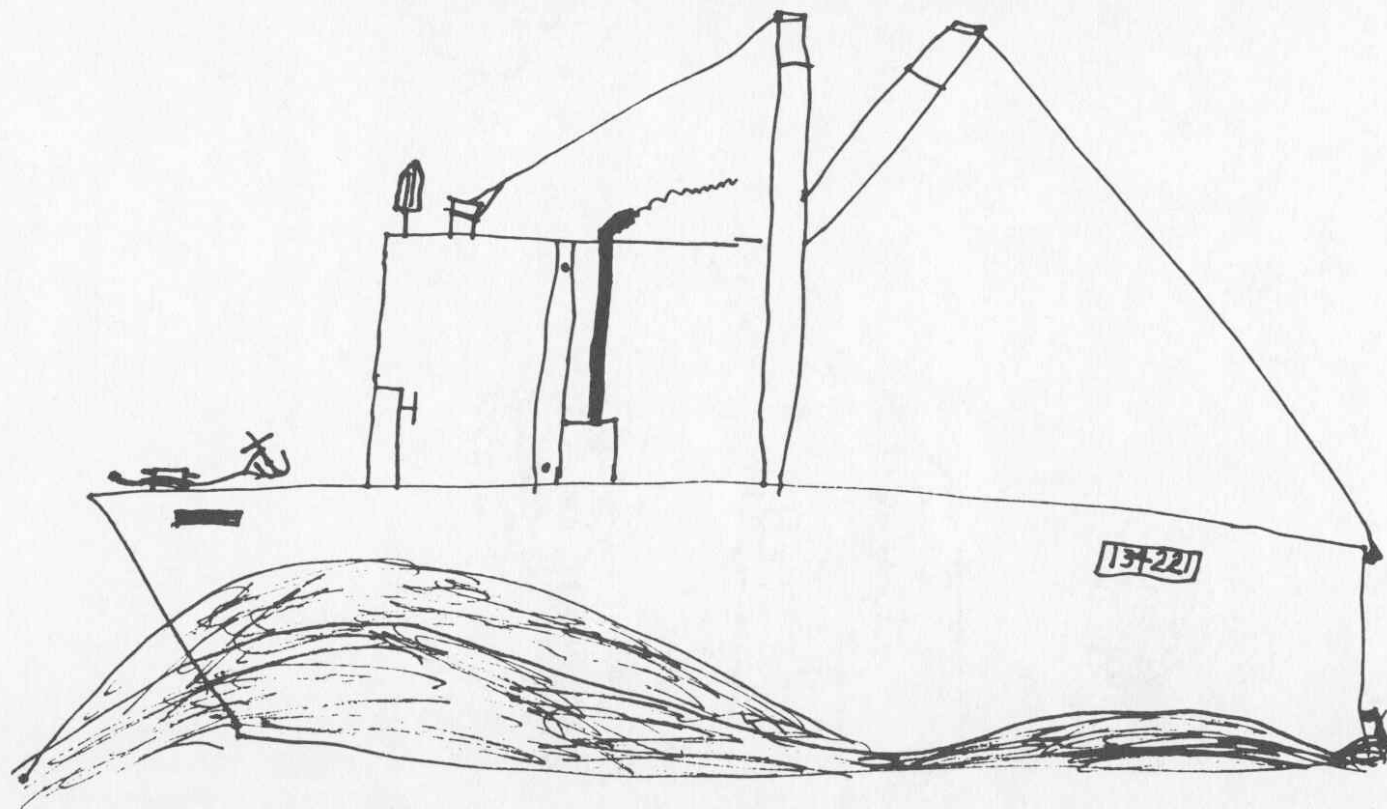
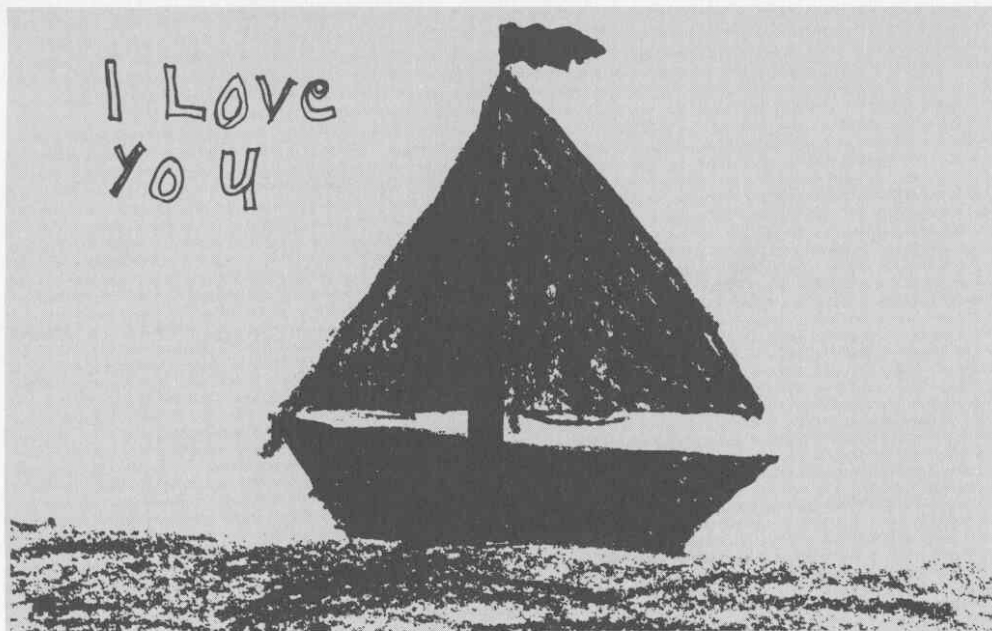
Not only *what* a child sees but also the *way* in which he or she sees comes through in drawings. One of the drawings that follow was done by a boy whose father owned a boat. He spent much time in and around boats and hoped to be a fisherman one day. The other drawing was done by a girl in the same community who loved boat rides.

Can you tell which child made each drawing?

How are they different?

How has the experience of each child affected his or her drawing style?

To be able to draw boats, a child does not need a lot of experience with real boats. How else might a child learn enough about boats to draw pictures of them?





The *feelings* a child has, about himself or herself, about other people, about events, places, and things, are another, important part of that child's experience.

For example, a child may feel "sure of herself." Her drawings may be big, bright, full of experiments. A second child may be unsure, very concerned with how other people see him. He may work slowly and carefully, even repeating drawings that have turned out well.

Events in children's lives awaken feelings that make their way into drawings—the bravery of playing with a dog, the excitement of going to the supermarket, or the thrill of Halloween.



## Finding Out about Your Own Drawing Style

Using pencil, crayons, or paint, draw a picture that expresses the feeling of "sadness." Then get together with other students, and compare what you have done.

How did you get started making the drawing? (Did you plan it or start right in without much thought?)

Did you draw quickly or slowly, cautiously or carelessly?

Did you use few or many lines?

How did you use the space on your paper?

Did you mean for your drawing to look like something?

Spend a few minutes writing in your journal what you think your drawing reveals about you. Then find a place where everyone can display their drawings together.

What different styles are there?

Can people explain why they made their drawings as they did?

## Observing Through Film: "Clay Play"

The film "Clay Play" will give you a chance to observe children as they work with another kind of art material, clay. Watching the film will provide an opportunity to "put together" much of what you've learned about the experience of making something and about how different it is for different children.

The film shows two 5½-year-old girls, Lissa and Leah, at work with clay. What they do with the clay and how they do it are quite different.

Describe the difference between Leah's and Lissa's styles in a word or phrase. In what ways did they show this difference?

Think about what each girl made and the way she went about it. How did Leah's way of working with clay show "who she is"? How did Lissa's way of working with clay show "who she is"?

How might you work with each of these girls?



## Drawing Sort

Among the materials for *Children's Art* are several copies of a poster containing drawings by children two to six years old. Divide into small groups, each group taking one poster. Cut the poster apart so that you have a series of separate drawings. Put all the drawings together that seem to have been made by children at about the same developmental level. Next, try to put the drawings in sequence: put the drawings that show an early stage of development first, then the ones that show more development. Base your choices on your own experience as much as possible.

Once the group has agreed on an order for the drawings, look them over.

In what ways are the drawings at the end of the sequence different from the first ones?

Compare and discuss your arrangement with other groups of students. Make a list of changes that you think occur in children's drawings as children develop.

# Marking, Shaping, and Symbolizing

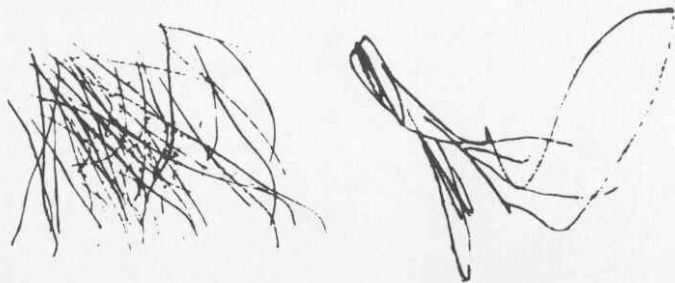
Some people who study children's art believe that as children develop they approach drawing differently. These differences come out in the way children make marks, form shapes, and use symbols.

## Marking

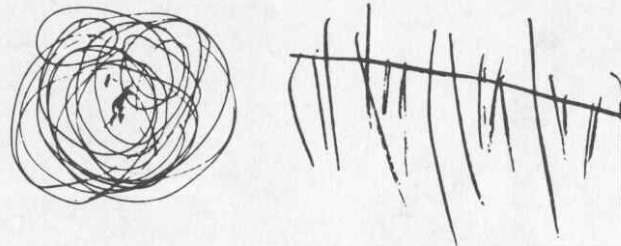
Think of a line as a mark on the paper. It might be long or short, wavy or straight, tangled or neat:



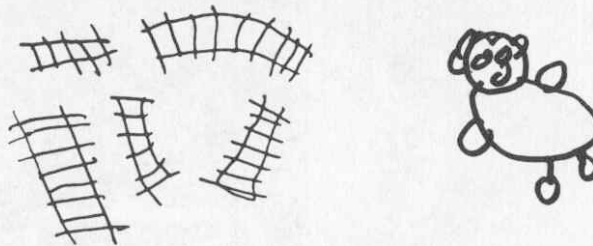
When they are about two years old, children start to experiment with marking. They make spirals, zig-zags, and a few straight lines. Their marks look unplanned. Lines cross over and bump into one another:



Eventually their marks become more organized. There are more straight lines, and lines look stronger and more controlled. They don't cut across each other as much. There are more types of lines—long, short, thick, thin, wiggly, curved:



Soon children learn to do countless things with lines. They begin to make patterns with them. Later, as their patterns grow more varied and intricate, they will draw grass or hair, the stripes on an animal, the curls on a girl's head:



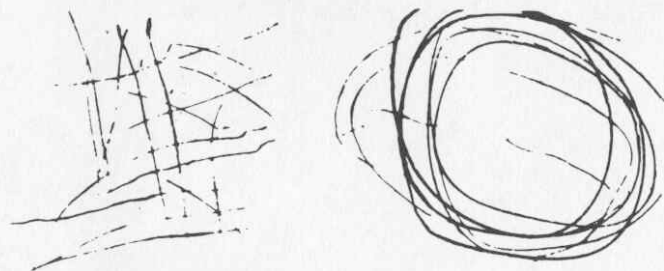
## Shaping

Think of a shape as a pattern made when a line comes back to meet itself. Circles, squares, and rectangles are all familiar shapes, but there are many shapes that don't have names:

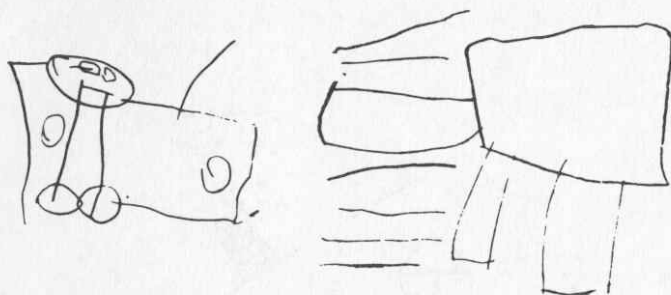




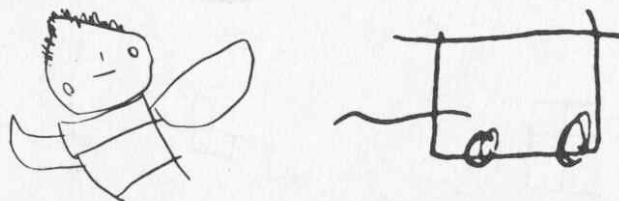
In the drawings of a two-year-old, shapes are often seen. But these are made accidentally, perhaps as the result of several lines crossing, or of a spiral turning into a circle:



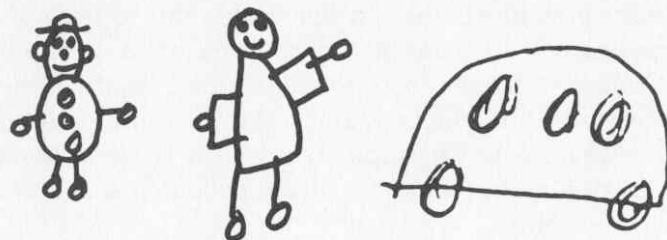
As children grow older, they begin to make shapes that look more planned and definite. There is often a pattern of shapes—two shapes put together, shapes inside shapes, large shapes, small shapes:



Eventually children can make many shapes, and plan and draw them carefully. Later, they gain the ability to create and arrange shapes that communicate ideas or feelings to others:

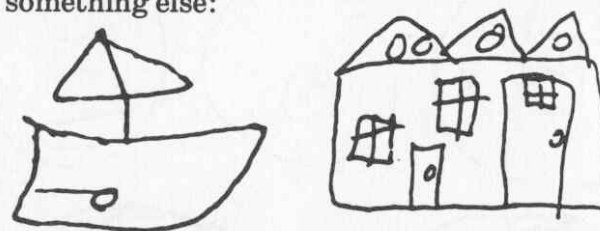


With continued growth, the sizes and shapes a child draws are chosen carefully and contain details. Two circles and two oblongs make a rabbit; a man gets a hat, pants, and buttons down his coat:



## Symbolizing

Think of a symbol as something that stands for something else. For example, the word “foot” stands for or “symbolizes” that thing with five toes at the end of your leg. In the same way, an arrangement of lines and shapes can be a symbol of something else:

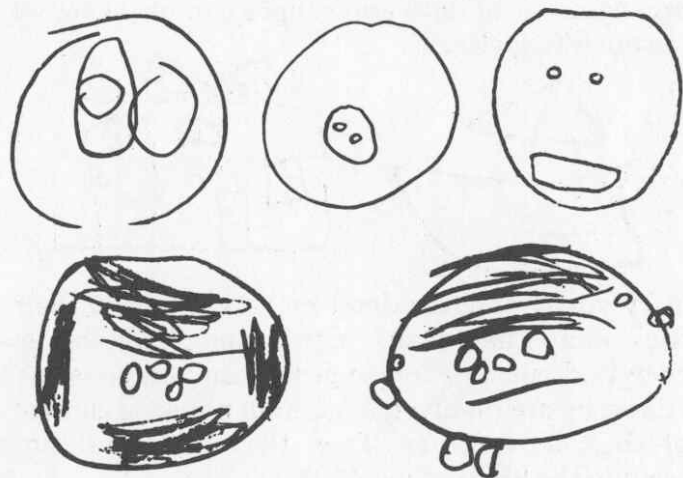


Very young children don't make symbols in their drawings. They make marks and scribbles as they find out how to use pencils and crayons. At first they are involved in gaining physical control of their movements. Then they focus on controlling the kinds of marks they make.



As children develop, they draw clearer lines and begin to make shapes. At the same time, they start learning from books and people that drawings can picture objects, people, and places. They are eager to see that some of the shapes they make look like things in the world, and so they often name the roughest scribbles, calling them "grass," "fire," "a dinosaur fight." Soon their shapes become clearer and begin to remind them of real objects or people. They pick these shapes out and name them. A circle becomes a face, a wheel, a sun.

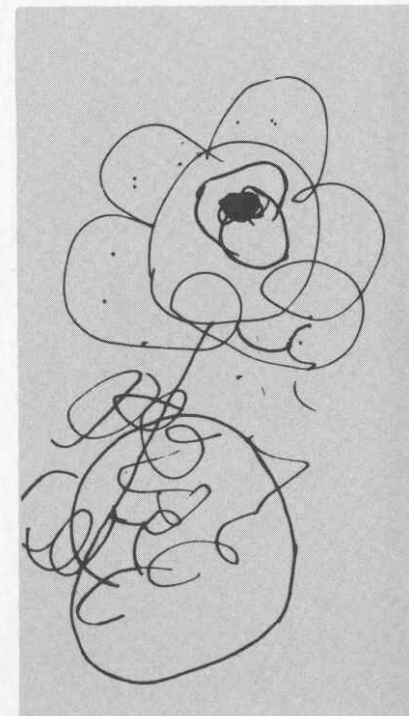
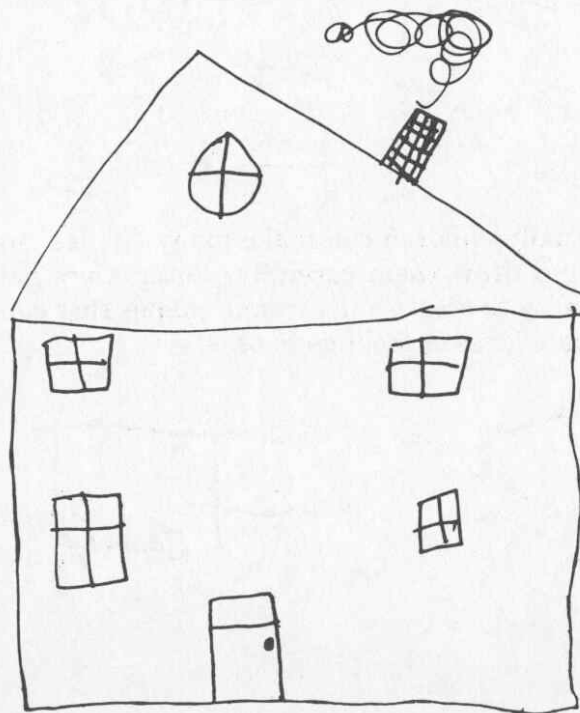
Children eventually realize that they can do things to their drawings to make them stand for, or symbolize, things other people can recognize too. The circle that once was called a man acquires legs and arms, and then a face. Something like this happens:

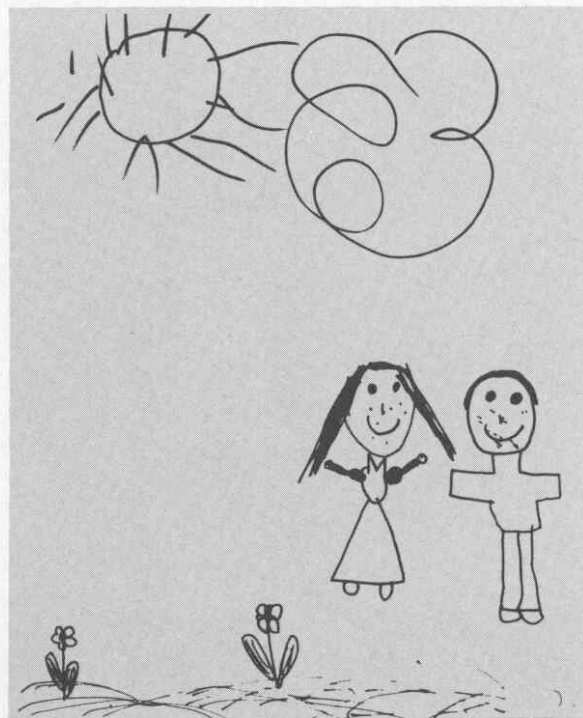
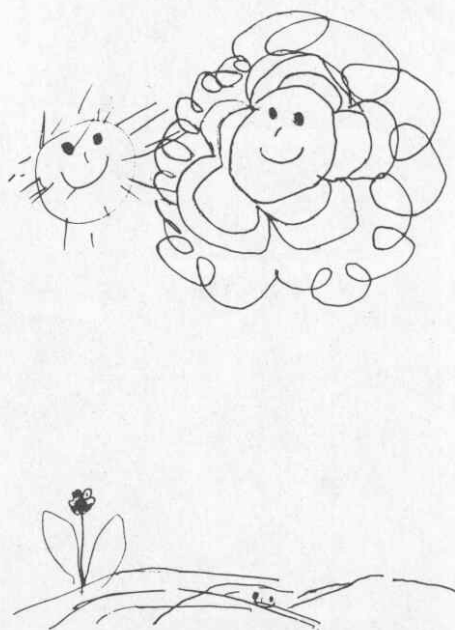
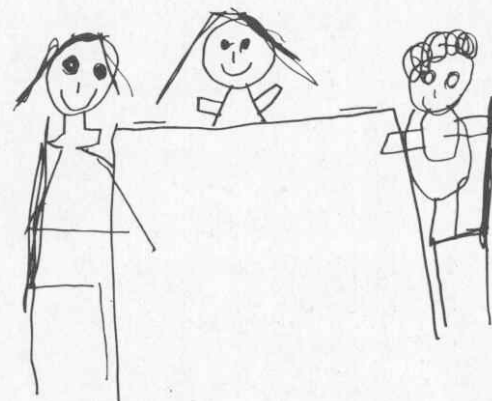


*These drawings were all done by one seven-year old child.*

*How are the drawings similar?*

*What changes from drawing to drawing?*





# Observing Through Film: "Painting Time"

"Painting Time" is a short film of four-year-old Patrice as he paints. Patrice has already learned a great deal about what he can make paints do; he has mastered marking. Now he is teaching himself about shaping. As you watch, you will see how a child, through careful repetition and experiment, learns from his materials.

*For discussion after viewing*

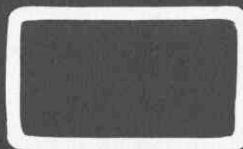
With further development, Patrice is likely to gain:

more control

more variety

the ability to symbolize

Looking back over your drawing sort, can you find evidence of these changes?





## Finding More Evidence

At your fieldsite, compare the drawings of two children who are at least a year apart in age. Look at how lines, shapes, and symbols are used.

How do the drawings differ?

Bring these drawings to class. Make your own “drawing sort” based on these pictures. Using the questions found on pages 16-17, talk about the differences you see.

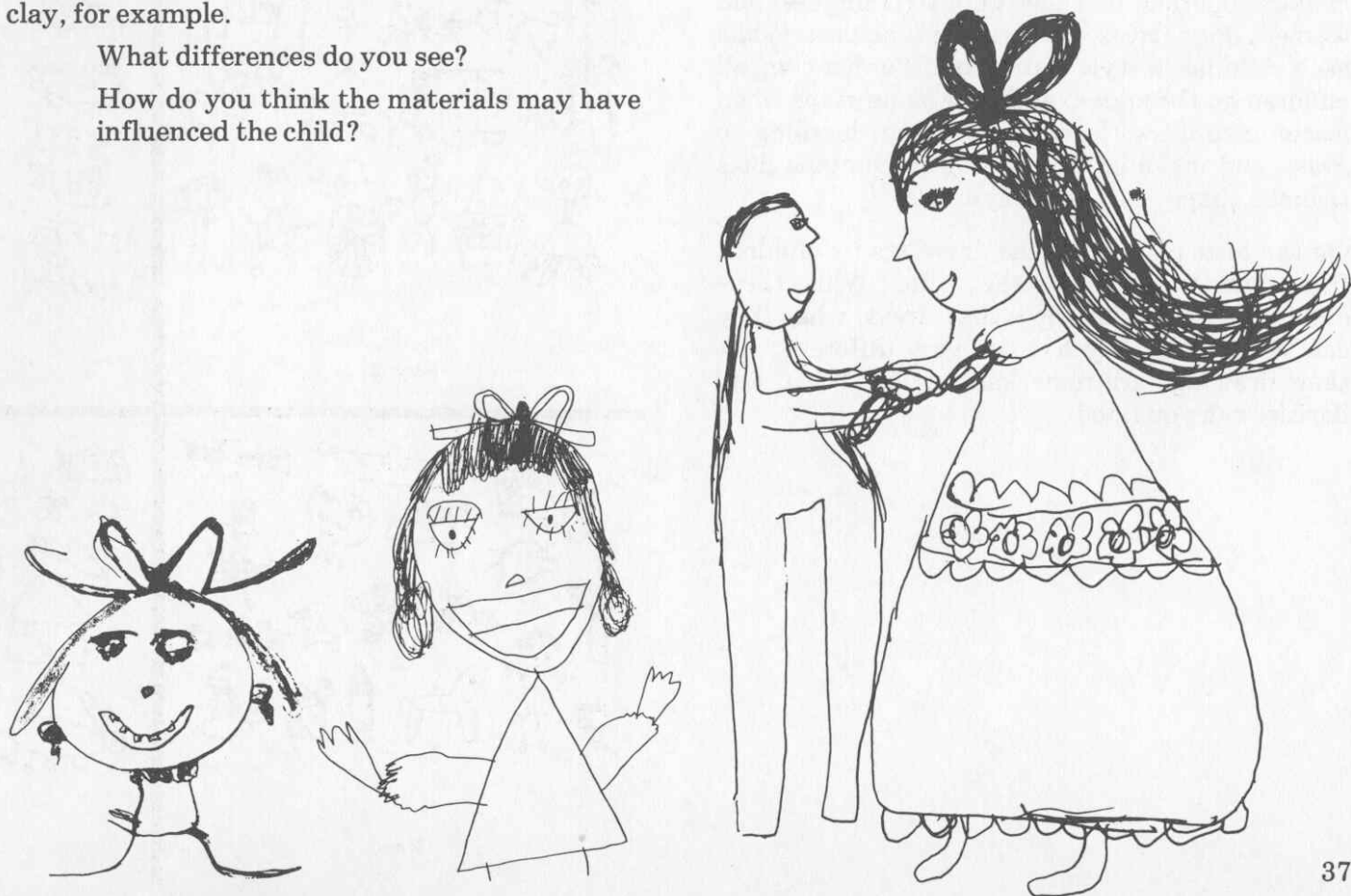
You might also collect art done by one child with different materials: crayons, paints, chalks, or clay, for example.

What differences do you see?

How do you think the materials may have influenced the child?

## Another Look

As children’s ability to draw changes with development, so do other changes take place—the ways children use their hands, the amount of contact they have with other people, the way they think about space. Look again at your array of children’s drawings. Can you find clues that other kinds of development are going on at the same time that skill in using art materials is increasing?



*Here are several drawings of a girl done by a child between the ages of five and seven. What changes do you see?*

# The Drawings of Children from Different Cultures

People who compare the drawings of children living in different parts of the world have noticed that all children go through the same steps in learning to draw. Children in Alabama, Viet Nam, Russia, and Nigeria all start by drawing lines, scribbles, and patches. Then they begin to connect lines to make shapes. Gradually they put shapes together to show familiar things—men, women, dogs, trees, flowers, rain, houses. While each child has a style distinctly his or her own, all children go through exactly the same steps when learning to draw: learning to grasp; learning to grasp and make lines; learning to combine lines to make shapes and, later, symbols.

On the next page are some drawings by children from countries all over the world. What these children do each day, how they dress, what they eat, and where they live are very different. Yet their drawings are remarkably alike. What similarities can you find?



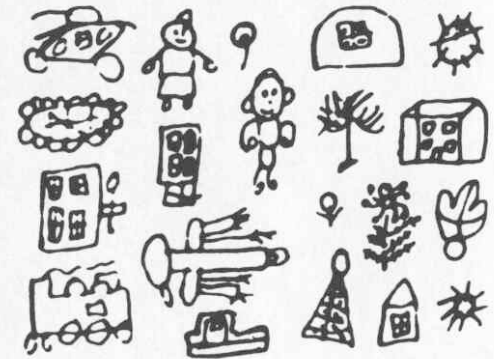
Argentina



China



Egypt



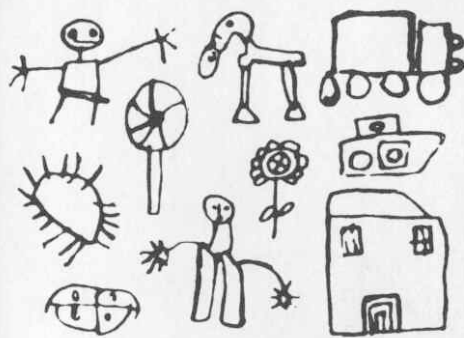
England



Greece



India



Israel



Italy



New Zealand



Spain



Syria



Thailand

## Why Are the Drawings of Young Children so Much Alike?

Wherever they live, human infants have many of the same experiences: they kick, suck, reach, and grasp. At first an infant grasps as a reflex. (You can make this happen by laying a finger on the palm of a baby's hand. Notice how tightly the baby's hand curls around your finger.)

When the child is older, and has more control over his or her movements, he or she will grasp in order to hold something: a toy, a bottle, a crayon. As the child gains more and more control over his or her movements, he or she can run, climb, eat with a spoon, hold a crayon steadily and make marks with it.

When children discover that they can make marks, they begin to explore: What happens if I bang the crayon? What marks will I make if I push it across the paper? if I pull it toward me? Trying different ways of making marks is how children build up an understanding of what they can do with crayons.

At some point in this experimenting, children learn how to make a shape. Then they discover how to make more shapes and how to combine shapes into patterns. Sometimes these will remind a child of familiar objects: a face, a snowman, a tree, a car. These outlines the child names. Eventually, he or she will fill in such familiar outlines with details, eager to make them "look like" real-world objects that other people can identify and call by name.



## Why Are the Drawings of Older Children so Different?

Most people who study children agree that young children are egocentric—they see the world just from their own point of view. Somewhere between the ages of five and seven most children become actively interested in what other people do and say and look like, and how they act toward one another. When this happens, children's drawings





start to change. They start to reflect the particular world that surrounds them.

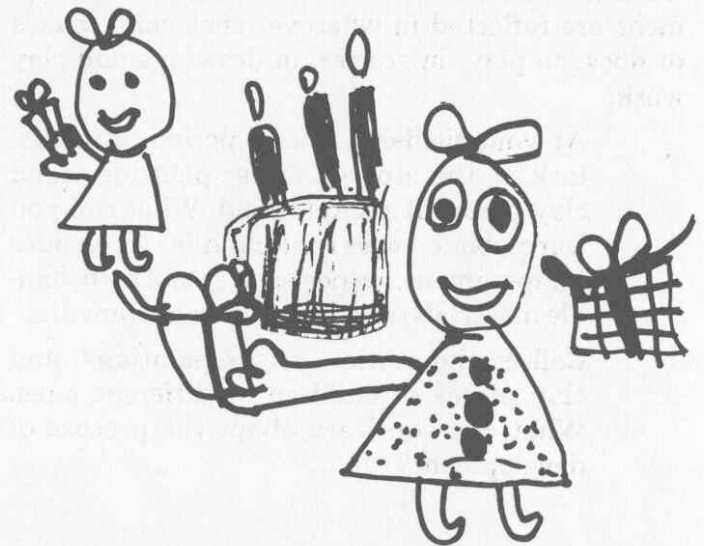
On the opposite page are some photographs taken in Bali in 1939. Beside them are drawings done by Balinese children at the same time. These photos show the "special" events of Balinese life — cockfights, festivals, and dances.

On this page are photos of the special events in modern America, and drawings done by Ameri-

can children. As you compare the two sets of drawings, think about these questions:

In what ways are the drawings by Balinese children different from the drawings by American children?

Can you think of ways in which, despite these differences, the experience of making these drawings might have been similar for both groups of children?





# A Longer Look at Children's Art

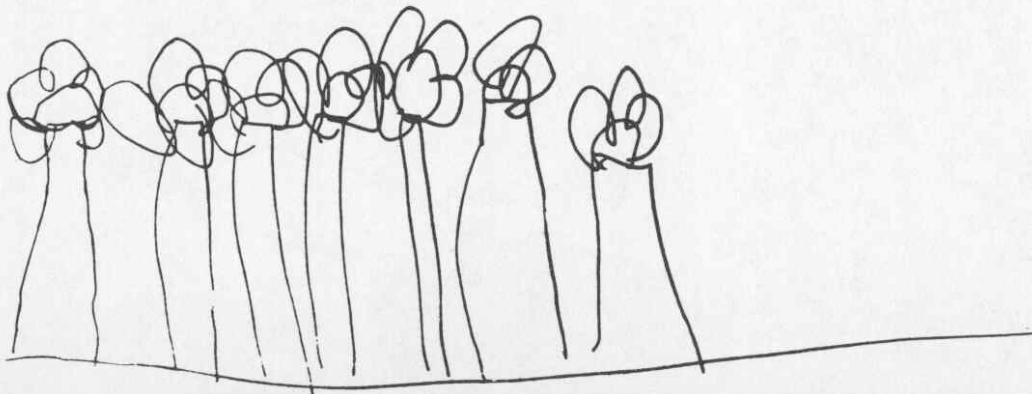
Through reading, watching films, and observing at your fieldsite, you have found ways that children's drawings tell about:

the lives of individual children,  
the experience of development.

Both the child and the child's stage of development are reflected in whatever that child makes or does: in play, in stories, in drawings and clay work.

At your fieldsite, over a period of weeks, look at the stories, finger paintings, and clay pieces of a single child. What can you learn about "who that child is"? Consider temperament, experience, ability to handle materials, and stage of development.

Collect the stories, finger paintings, and clay pieces of children of different ages. What can you learn about the process of development?



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