

Early Years Coalition



Making Marks

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN'S DRAWING



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Come on a journey of discovery to learn more about children's art – a journey of wonder and excitement of Tasmania's competent, creative youngest citizens. This document has been designed as a resource to share a little of what the research tells us about children's artistic development.

Please read a little about each stage of development and look carefully at children's work to identify how these stages are emerging. Please remember though each child grows as an artist in a unique way. The age ranges mentioned were originally identified by the researchers Rhoda Kellogg and Viktor Lowenfeld. They are introduced only as a guide to honour our children's artistic genius at each age. We hope that you enjoy this document and trust that it will inspire you to support children's artistic explorations, always.

These materials were prepared by Di Nailon B4 Leader; and are updated from those she created for Northern Children's Network 2017 ArTastic exhibition, Launceston. They are based on the work of:

- Kellogg, R. (1969). *Analyzing children's art*. Palo Alto, CA: National Press Books.
- Lowenfeld, V. (1954). *Your child and his art: A guide for parents*. New York, NY: Macmillan.



The Earliest Stage

RANDOM TO CONTROLLED SCRIBBLES

Up to around 2 years of age children make 'scribbles' – marks on paper or other surfaces. Rhoda Kellogg, a researcher into children's art, classified 'scribbles' into twenty basic types which demonstrate how children progress from random to controlled scribbles.

At first, very young children make marks that Kellogg called **random scribbling**. The marks may go in many directions and are affected by the way a child holds the crayon. Random scribbles often appear to be spontaneous and children may or may not look at what they are doing with the crayon. At this stage mark-making is a sensory experience – 'the feeling of a crayon in my hand'. The child may not even realise they are making the mark.

As children gain control over their arm and hand movements they begin what Rhoda Kellogg called **controlled scribbling**. They make connections between their motions and the marks they are drawing. Adults often cannot see the difference between random scribbles and controlled scribbles. However, the change is very important as children can direct where the marks go. There is some coordination between seeing and doing.

Look for examples of these earliest scribble types:

Look for examples of these earliest scribble types:

1. Dot 
2. Single vertical line 
3. Single horizontal line 
4. Single diagonal line 
5. Single curved line 
6. Multiple vertical lines 
7. Multiple horizontal lines 
8. Multiple diagonal lines 
9. Multiple curved lines 
10. Roving open line 
11. Roving enclosed line 
12. Zig-zag/waving line 
13. Single loop line 
14. Multiple loop line 
15. Spiral line 
16. Multiple-line overlaid circle 
17. Multiple-line circumference circle 
18. Circular line spread out 
19. Single crossed line 
20. Imperfect circle 

Intentional Mark-Making Stages: FROM PLACEMENT TO DESIGN

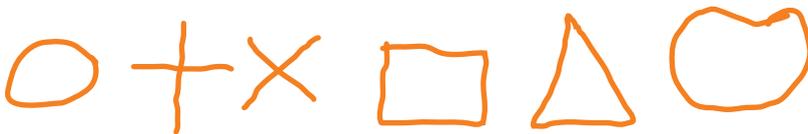
From around 2 years onwards children's eyes guide their hands and they become concerned with where they place their marks on the paper. They may repeatedly locate their scribbles on one section of a page. Can you see examples of these placements in the drawings on display?

 All Over	 Central	 Bottom or Top
 Diagonal	 Right or Left	 Top or Bottom Quarter

At around 3 years of age, children's scribbles begin to resemble rough **shapes**. Children may begin to name their scribbles and think their shapes look like real objects.



Rough shapes soon become single basic outline forms Rhoda Kellogg called **diagrams**.



Circle

Cross

X

Square

Triangle

Odd Form

At around 3 – 4 years of age children are in Rhoda Kellogg's design stage, when they combine two, three or more diagrams (basic shapes) into repeating patterns, or use them to represent something they know. Can you see examples of **combines** (two basic shapes) or **aggregates** (three or more basic shapes) in the drawings on display?

Examples of **combines**:



Examples of **aggregates**:



When children have played with more and more complex aggregates we begin to see **Mandalas** emerge



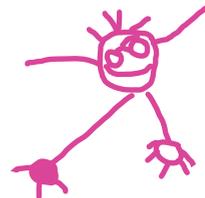
We will also see the **Sun** emerge.



And from the sun to **Radials**



Rhoda Kellogg suggested that the sun and mandala lead to the first drawings of humans.



Beginning Pictorial/Preschematic Stage: FINDING A WAY TO REPRESENT OBJECTS

Children as young as 3 to 4 years of age begin to display highly imaginative works of art. They are uninhibited as they emerge from scribbling. They make mental connections between the shapes they are creating and the objects that exist in the world. It is the time they search for a **schema** – a way to represent objects.

In children's drawings, do you see circles being used for a sun, the centre of a flower; the head or body of a person, or the shape of a beach ball? Do you see rectangles or squares being used as the bottom of a house or a triangle being used to represent the roof?



Victor Lowenfeld suggested that preschematic drawings tell us a lot about what is important in a child's life. Sizes of what is represented on the page help the children express what they are thinking or feeling about people and objects.

Can you see what is important or relevant to young children's lives? Look for what dominates the drawing, what is omitted, exaggerated or distorted.

Beginning Pictorial/Preschematic Stage: FINDING A WAY TO REPRESENT OBJECTS

Other things to look for in the preschematic stage:

Images of people and objects All drawn facing forward



Humans The face is central with limited body parts added creating modified mandalas



Animals Early animals resemble humans that are horizontal. Children are often influenced by pictures in animal books.



Buildings Are drawn by combining basic shapes in various ways, not by observing houses.



Vegetation Early trees resemble armless humans.



Transportation Children draw common formulas for boats and wheeled vehicles whether or not they have seen the 'real thing'.



Use of space Objects are usually drawn floating around a page in ways that make sense to the child.



Story-telling-drawing Voluntarily share what is going on in their drawings – talking and drawing simultaneously.



Ages around 4 to 5 (to 7 years) is often a time of crisis in child art. Adults seldom appreciate spontaneous art and give children formulas to copy. Once formulas for objects which are 'acceptable' to adults are learned, the child will make combinations of them into scenes. These formulas (such as stick figures) often last until children themselves reach adulthood and in turn give their children formulas (often in the form of stencils, or those found in colouring books).

Most children stop all spontaneous art activity by the age of 8 or so. Those who continue to be spontaneous usually study and practice techniques which they master in various media.

What will you do to support such learning, explorations and skill development in ways that challenge not choke creativity?



