

Child Art is Great!

By Susie Busby



Here at Artful Dodgers we think child art is great. It offers us grown-ups a small peek into the world of our children and an opportunity to find out what is really important to them. And, by studying your children's artwork you have the chance to look at the world from a different perspective – through the eyes of a child.

It's easy to appreciate how fantastic child art is once you can let go of your preconceptions about what art should be. One way to achieve this is to stop comparing child art to that of an adult. Children simply can't produce work like an adult. And, with a little thought, it's obvious why not:

- they don't have the skills to manipulate the materials
- their emotional and life experiences are limited
- cultural stereotypes haven't been learnt

I believe giving your child the opportunity to explore art materials and make art is a very important part of their development. It helps them to understand the world around them and gives them a means of demonstrating tangible emotions and feelings they may not be able to otherwise express. It also helps them to develop problem solving skills, become more imaginative and observant, more appreciative of the world, increases their confidence and they become more responsive to adults. What more could you ask?

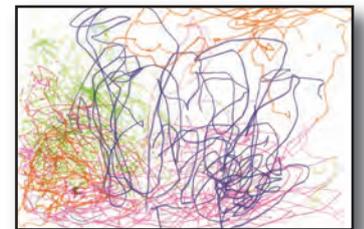
So next time your child brings their picture or model to you, take the time to consider it carefully – we're sure you'll be pleasantly surprised.

What to Expect at Each Age

There are some broadly defined developmental stages to children's drawing. However, these stages are only a guide and can overlap significantly. Quite often children switch backwards and forwards between stages – don't panic, it's normal!



18 months – 3 years of age – Pictures will be made up of lines and colour – more commonly known as scribbling or fanning. The child will be enjoying moving their arms and making marks on the surface of the paper. As the child discovers the relationship between the movement and the marks, they start to control their mark making. As well as finding out what the picture means to the child (and we're sure you'll be surprised) enjoy seeing your own pictures in their marks – just like you might in the clouds.



3 – 4 years of age – Figures start to emerge using circles and lines. At first they'll just be a circle and a line. But, as time goes by, fingers, toes, bodies and faces start to be added – though not always in the correct anatomical place!



5+ – Most children have developed a range of symbols to represent things around them – a house, a tree, a person. You'll see these repeated in their paintings and drawings. A baseline starts to appear in drawings to anchor objects into place.





8+ – Children start to add more detail to their drawings, wanting them to look more 'real'. An awareness of space within the drawings appears, with items overlapping and the appearance of a horizon rather than a baseline in landscapes. Children start to compare their work with others and become critical of it.



12+ – This marks the end of spontaneous art activity as the youngster tries to make their work look more representative of the real world. They can become frustrated when they're not achieving the desired results. This is where a teacher is needed to help them develop their skills. For a more in depth analysis of how child drawing develops we recommend you download 'Young In Art' from: http://www.artjunction.org/young_in_art.pdf

Making Art – a whole world of discovery and development

Children rarely need encouragement to make works of art. Put a pencil and paper in front of them and they'll draw. You don't need to have a dedicated space to make art as the kitchen table will do nicely. However, it's a good idea to keep art materials, especially felt tips, crayons, pencils and paper somewhere easy for your children to get themselves. This will mean they can make art spontaneously without you having to stop what you are doing.



Original White Box

Consider purchasing our Original White Box, which has everything your child needs to draw, paint, collage and model in a container the size of a shoebox. This is easy to store and is big enough to gather everything up quickly and neatly when you want your table back for dinner.

If you're brave enough to allow paint in the house (I did from my daughter being 18 months old and never regretted it) simply teach them to be responsible for: laying out splash mats; putting on their aprons; keeping paint in the pot, on the brush or paper; washing hands, so they don't get it on the furniture or walls etc. They'll enjoy the ceremony of getting dressed up to paint and acting out the role of a painter.



Children Make Wonderful Art – make sure they know it

Children make wonderful art when left to get on with their own ideas, but do help when they ask for it. Once completed, consider their artwork properly, finding positive things to say about it as well as commenting on their use of colour, materials, space and subject matter.

Find a special place to display the best artwork. We recommend you keep and date your favourite pieces – you'll be very pleased you did in years to come.

Show Children that Inspiration is all Around

As well as making art materials available to your child, looking at a broad range of work beyond drawing and painting will be really useful in your child's artistic development. Looking at architecture, interior design, handicrafts and sculpture will also help develop their perception and understanding of art and will, hopefully, encourage them to develop their own style and thoughts about their work. It's also lots of fun!

For more information, advice and to purchase materials visit:

www.artfuldodgers.co.uk