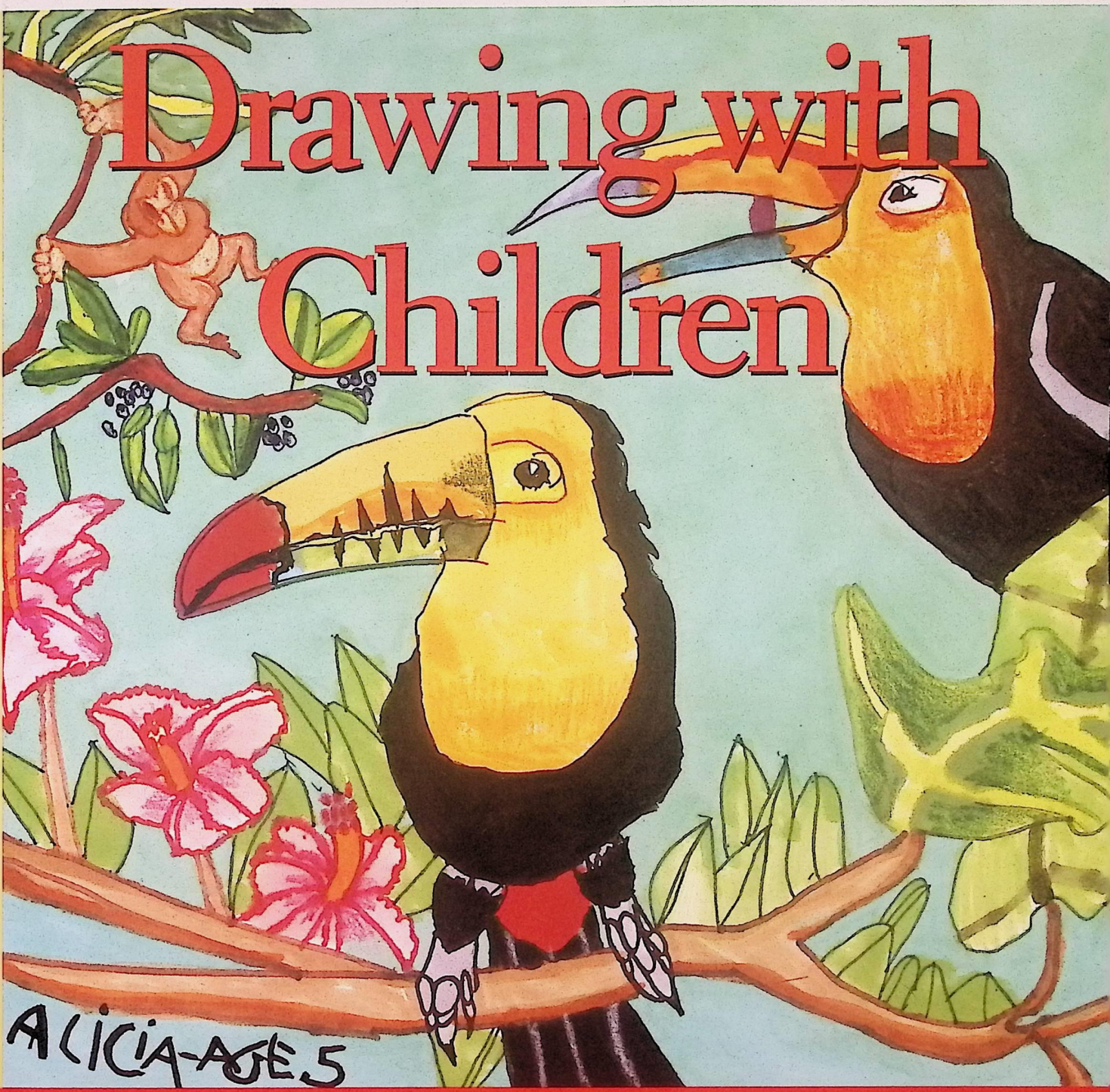
REVISED AND EXPANDED 10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Drawing with Children



A Creative Method for Adult Beginners, Too

MONA BROOKES
author of *Drawing for Older Children & Teens*

Contents

Before You Draw

In order to develop yourself as an artist and be able to teach others, you need to consider your feelings about your own drawing and your opinions about drawing in general. The adults who take my training say that their drawing ability is strongly improved by this preliminary work on their opinions; they are surprised to find it as beneficial as the drawing experiences themselves. This section will help you explore your feelings, provide you with a preinstruction drawing experience, and assist in the unfolding of your full potential.

How You Feel about Your Own Drawing Ability

If you feel confident about your drawing but want a vehicle to teach others, approach this method with a fresh and open outlook. If you don't feel confident about your own drawing or your ability to work with children, let me assure you that this can change. The drawings by beginner adults that you see in the color section exemplify the kind of work that was achieved by worried and unconfident beginners. None of these students knew whether they could draw and were surprised at their results. If you want to improve your own drawing and don't intend to teach anyone else, simply become your own teacher.

How often have you heard someone conclusively state, "I can't draw"? It is accepted that only a few are blessed with the gift of drawing and that no excuse is necessary for not being able to draw. You can even hear successful painters, designers,

and artistically inclined people make this statement, but with additional embarrassment and frustration. This attitude can change, whether you want to teach yourself or others. One gentleman, shaking and sweating at the beginning of a one-day workshop, admitted to the group he was shocked to display such real fear over the idea of possibly being unable to draw. He said he was sorry he had come; he was sure he'd fail. By the end of the day, he was beaming with pride at his accomplishments and said that if he could draw, anyone could. He couldn't believe I had witnessed this same phenomenon many times.

Where You Stand Now

Read the list of five statements and pick the one that best fits the way you feel about your drawing. Make the choice according to the way you feel now, rather than past opinions.

1. I am very confident and satisfied with my current drawing ability.
2. I can draw, but I would like to draw better.
3. It has been so long since I've drawn, I don't know if I can draw anymore.
4. I can't draw, but I think I could learn.
5. I can't draw, and I don't think I could learn.

What You Think about Drawing

Let's see how you feel about drawing in general. Read these eight statements and notice how many you tend to agree with.

1. The ability to draw is inherited.
2. There is a right and a wrong way to draw.
3. Drawing is simply for pleasure and has no practical use.
4. Art lessons should be given only to those children who show talent and may become artists when they grow up.
5. Structured drawing lessons are inappropriate for children; they should develop their ability through free expression and exploration only.

6. People who can't draw realistically, with accurate shading and correct proportion, aren't real artists.
7. Real artists draw from their imagination and don't need to copy things.
8. Real artists are pleased with most of what they produce.

Most of us feel that certain of these statements are true. I now believe that none of them are true. As we consider these falsehoods, we begin to relate emotionally to our frustrating childhood drawing experiences. Reevaluating those memories with updated information will help us make the shift toward success. As we proceed we'll be discussing these ideas in more detail.

Let's Draw

You can make the most progress in your drawing by establishing how the eight issues you just considered affect your current drawing ability. Take the next few minutes and see how you draw today. You want to evaluate how you feel about your drawing the way it is, so there is nothing to gain by trying to attain any particular effect. Just do as well as you can without worrying about it.

- Find a quiet space where no one will interrupt you for at least 30 minutes.
- Unplug the phone.
- Find a flat surface to draw on, and make yourself comfortable.
- Use plain paper and a black felt-tip marker or ballpoint pen with a regular to fine point. If all you have is a pencil, don't use the eraser.
- Have paper for note-taking next to the drawing paper.

Draw a Scene with . . .

a house

a person

a tree

some bushes and flowers

at least five other things of your choice

A Few Tips

- Relax and enjoy the process.
- Don't start over or erase if you don't like something. Make some kind of adjustment and continue until you finish drawing all the subjects.
- Don't allow yourself to be interrupted.
- As you notice your thoughts and emotional reactions, stop and write them down on the note paper. For the sake of the exercise, try not to analyze them yet. Simply note your feelings and jot down a few words to remind yourself of them.

When You Have Finished

- Get up and take a stretch, but don't allow yourself to talk to others or be distracted from the process.
- Come back, prop the drawing up, and take a long, hard look at it.
- Add any additional comments to your notes.

How You Felt

Now you can analyze your feelings and comments. Take a few minutes to let the memories that go with the feelings surface. Here are some things to consider as you learn what it all means for you.

How did you do, compared with how you thought you would do?

While you were drawing, did your thoughts reflect any of the opinions or experiences you had as a child? What can you remember about those early drawing experiences?

Were any of your thoughts related to the eight statements about drawing that you considered prior to the drawing experience? If so, how did you come to have those opinions?

If you found yourself being overly critical about your performance, don't worry; you're not alone. I find that even people who do quite well will malign themselves. Once I heard a ten-year-old quietly tell another student, "I don't even believe the awful stuff I say about my drawings anymore, I must be fishing for compliments," and they both burst into knowing laughter. If you experienced any self-doubts while you were drawing, it would be normal for you to feel reluctant to let others see your drawings, to feel that you would not be able to improve easily, or to feel uncomfortable with the idea of teaching someone else. None of that is necessary. If you can hang in there for just a few days of discomfort and are willing to change your opinions and expectations, you can quickly see amazing growth.

Changing Your Attitudes and Abilities

Exposing yourself to new information about the drawing process will make a more dramatic change in your current ability to draw than will any other factor. Changing your expectations about what is acceptable and possible can be the key to unlocking the door. So let's take the eight statements you considered about the subject of drawing and see if we can shed some new light on them.

New Understandings

1. *The ability to draw is inherited.* This is one of the main reasons people believe they can't draw. If you don't have an artist in your immediate family, as many of us don't, you might have decided it was impossible for you to draw after a few minor attempts. Once you've bought the idea that drawing is an inherited talent, you are probably too quick to give up when you don't achieve immediate success or your beginning attempts feel uncomfortable. Can you imagine how many people would learn to roller-skate if they took this same approach?

Drawing is a teachable subject and artistic talent can be developed. When I first faced packed schoolrooms of thirty-five restless and doubting preteens, I wasn't quite sure they would

have the success that the original preschoolers had had. I think I was as shocked as anyone else when, time after time, all the children achieved a variety of imaginative and successful results. I now realize that such success can be expected when you create a safe environment and give students the information they need.

As for "hereditary artists," some of the most resistant students come from a family with a designated artist as one of its members. Many artists bring their children to Monart with the hopes that someone outside of the family will encourage them to try. These children often had refused to draw at all for fear of being compared with the artist in their family. My own son, for instance, never participated in art in school, convincing all the teachers he just wasn't interested in the subject. Since he was an excellent musician, no one felt it was necessary for him to draw. When he was a teenager, he came into my studio a few times and announced his inability. We were all amazed when at nineteen he finally decided the safe environment was so accessible that he would take the training. His drawings were very sensitive and imaginative and showed great promise. He became the Monart staff's favorite substitute teacher and later taught some classes of his own.

2. *There is a right and a wrong way to draw.* You will find very little agreement, even among art critics, on what is good or bad art. In art courses, one professor will grade a drawing with an A, while another will reject it. Since it really boils down to personal opinion, you might as well listen to your own inner critic and draw for yourself instead of others. Unless you want to sell your art, it is not important to consider what others may or may not like.

3. *Drawing is simply for pleasure and has no practical use.* Operating on this premise, public schools in the United States cut art budgets first, whenever money is tight. In the early 1980s some art classes were still available, but these usually came in the form of sporadic "crafts time" for the very young or elective art classes for upper grade levels. As the economic crunch hit, in the late '80s, the arts completely disappeared in many school districts. Interestingly, my Monart teacher training programs began to increase at the same time. The teachers' and parent teacher associations began to hire us to come to

their districts and teach them our method, paying for their training out of their own personal budgets. They instinctively knew that the arts helped children succeed in other school subjects. School districts began doing studies to show that control groups of students given the Monart training were scoring better in reading, writing, and math at the end of the year. As Howard Gardner and other education specialists began to talk about multiple intelligence theory, parents and teachers got the statistics they needed to prove their intuition had been right. Such studies convinced administrators that arts programs like Monart were a necessity, not a luxury. In the '90s as budgets are being cut even more, school districts are using regular curriculum funding to underwrite integrated programs combining drawing with basic academic subjects. One of the major reasons I was so thrilled to write the revised edition of this book was to talk about these new developments in the added chapters.

Adults who learn to draw also tell many stories about how their lives have changed and other skills have improved in the process. Business corporations are giving the Monart drawing courses to middle managers to help them with their problem-solving abilities and critical-thinking skills. It's interesting to note that when people accomplish something they never thought they could do, it changes their belief system. They realize they can approach other unknown areas and subjects with a more open attitude to learning.

4. *Art lessons should be given only to children who show talent and may become artists when they grow up.* Now that I know that all children can draw if given the proper exposure, I find this statement ridiculous and confusing. I regret that it intimates that you need to "grow up" to be an artist and only adds to the confusion. Who says you have to be a certain age to be an artist? Unfortunately, children's artwork is looked down on; its intrinsic worth is not recognized, nor is it displayed or hung with due respect. Children could be enjoying their own artwork in the books they read, the items they use, and on the walls of their homes. I was delighted when, as the public began to see serious art exhibits of Monart students' work, they often asked how to contact the parents to find out if they could buy the children's artwork for their homes. When

Monart students receive encouragement from relatives and friends to become artists when they "grow up," many respond, "I'm an artist *now*!"

5. *Structured drawing lessons are inappropriate for children. They should develop their ability through free expression and exploration only.* We don't expect children to play the piano, study dance, or learn a sport without showing them the basic components of these subjects. Why do we expect them to understand the complexities of drawing on their own? Imagine expecting children to write creative stories without teaching them the alphabet and the structure of language. Learning the language of drawing and painting is likewise essential for anyone wanting to pursue those arts creatively.

Adults who think they can't draw are taught by methods that include demonstration, visual exercise techniques such as mirror imaging, copying other line drawings upside down, and drawing the edges of negative space. Children need to learn the drawing process also, but with similar exercises that are geared to their age level. Children's creativity is not stifled if they're provided with a very general structure and are allowed to interpret the information any way they wish.

Some of my original Monart students are now nineteen to twenty years old. I still have contact with some of them. The ones who continued in classes through their teens became extraordinarily skilled and independent in their work.

They received recognition as artistically gifted students, and some are now art majors in college. Others are beginning to apply for internships and will eventually open Monart schools of their own. Many of the students who dropped out before the critical age of eight or nine did not continue with art or become independently creative. But this happens in music, math, dance, and most other subjects. If they were to expose themselves to art instruction again, these same students would blossom very quickly. A nineteen-year-old girl recently walked into my Santa Barbara school in wide-eyed shock. She just happened to be passing by the studio and saw the artwork in the windows. She was so excited that she interrupted the class and began telling me how she remembered drawing with me when she was in nursery school. The next week she joined the adult class and treated the other students by bringing in the portfolio her mother had saved of her preschool drawings.

Within weeks she was turning out very lovely, creative, and independent work. Because she had already learned the basics as a child, she went right on to skilled drawing.

6. *People who can't draw realistically, with accurate shading and correct proportion, aren't real artists.* Just mentioning Picasso's name seems to remind everyone of the inaccuracy of this statement. Many people don't even know that he was an accomplished realist in his early years. They are not aware that an artist can be equally proficient in many styles but simply prefer one over the other. It is my hope that we will drop our need for comparative judgment and learn that any approach to art is valid. However, if people are dissatisfied with their ability to draw realistically, they should understand that drawing is a teachable subject. With practice and study, they can achieve success.

7. *Real artists draw from their imaginations and don't need to copy things.* When it comes to drawing the endless number of creatures or subjects in nature, or the thousands of man-made objects in the environment, artists who work in realism often have extensive files of reference materials and pictures to remind themselves of the shape and structure of what they wish to draw. Sometimes they observe the object itself; but even then, they take photographs of it so they can continue working on the drawing later. They make sketches from other drawings and photographs, rearrange things, add ideas from their imagination, and create what is considered an original piece of artwork. Any realistic artists who imply they work solely from their imagination are not telling you the whole story. In this book I have simply given children and adult beginners the same options as professional artists.

We need to stop mystifying the drawing process and explain to students how artists actually achieve the results they do. For instance, Picasso and Michelangelo both copied other artists' work for at least two years as part of their initial art training. When Picasso began to express himself in what were considered "unique" styles he was actually copying many of his images from African masks. Painters such as Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec worked from photographs of their subjects, and many famous painters have used each other's paintings for inspiration.

Imagination always plays a part in the process. It is not a separate function existing independently from visual data. Integration of observation and imagination is what is needed. Again, I see both as necessary, rather than one taking precedence over the other.

8. *Real artists are pleased with most of what they produce.* Like the rest of us, professional artists are often dissatisfied with their work. Knowing this, we ought to give ourselves and the children we work with the freedom to be dissatisfied and to learn from experience. About ten years ago I developed a set of questions that help in this regard. I ask these questions in every group I lead, from large auditoriums full of educators to small groups of kindergarten kids. Literally thousands of people have answered them with the exact same responses and get the point at the end of the session. The questions are as follows:

1. "If an artist does five drawings, how many do you think they will like enough to frame and want to show people?" All groups easily and consistently answer, "One, or maybe two."
2. "Out of the five drawings, how many do you think they will dislike enough that they will not want others to see them and will want to start over or discard them entirely?" Consistent answer again, "One or two."
3. "What do you think they will do with the one or two left over?" Small children will answer, "Give it to Grandma," or "Save it in my drawer." Adults seldom make any response but once in a while say, "Save them."
4. "Why don't you give yourself the same privilege that you would give an artist?" No one ever says a word. They sit there looking at me in confusion.
5. "Why do you think you have to like everything you do?" The total silence continues. Even the four-year-olds realize the ridiculous expectations they place on themselves.
6. "If you do five drawings with me today, how many of them can you expect to like real well?" They smile and answer, "One, maybe two." Then when I ask, "Can you expect to dislike something about one or two of them?" they have

this relieved look on their faces and respond, "Yes." When I ask, "What will you do when you dislike something?" it is very easy for them to simply realize they can make changes or start over without risking their self-esteem or feeling like a failure. It is equally a relief to them when I remind them that artists seldom finish a piece of artwork in one sitting and that they too can continue working on something at a later date.

If you don't come to grips with unrealistic expectations, you may find yourself giving up before you've begun. When an adult beginner doesn't like his or her first couple of drawings, he tends to throw them away and conclude he has no ability. When a child tells an adult she doesn't like something about her drawing, it is quite common for the adult to begin praising the drawing and trying to talk the child into liking it. Adults act as if it would be a terrible experience for a child to dislike something about his or her work. If you do this, you rob a child of the ability to solve problems and develop creative thinking skills. It also creates tremendous stress to have to live up to false expectations. When I first saw teachers doing this to students, I remembered how angry this made me as a child. I remembered thinking, "What's the big deal? Why would it be so awful to just dislike a drawing?" When I was learning to play the flute no one was surprised when I hit wrong notes or tried to tell me how wonderful it sounded. Such false expectations and need for praise are probably two of the biggest reasons people aren't free to learn how to draw. Our society is totally unrealistic about what to expect of beginning drawers. We have created an unwillingness to take risks and to enjoy the process of learning. One of the most powerful things you can do to change this pattern is to present the above six questions to your students and discuss their responses honestly and openly with them.

Giving the Artist in You Permission to Unfold

With this new information and the realization that you have more in common with "real" artists than you thought, here are some suggestions on how to let the artist in you come out.

- Listen for your "silent critic" and retrain it. When you find yourself getting negative ideas about your abilities, don't judge yourself, just notice it and insert the new information you have just learned about your real potential.
- Know that you can be your own teacher or learn along with your students.
- Remember there is no wrong way to draw. If it is the way you want it, it is perfect. If it isn't, you can change it or start over, without feeling it's a failure.
- You don't need to feel guilty about using other visual data; professional artists don't draw entirely from their imaginations either.
- Don't prevent yourself from copying or getting ideas from things you see; you'll interpret them differently anyway, the way other artists do.
- Be patient with yourself, and have fun while you learn. Remember that all artists experience a certain dissatisfaction with much of what they produce. Don't throw away a drawing you think isn't perfect; you may learn from it later—or someone else may love it just the way it is.

This book will help you change your misconceptions. With the exception of one student, the adult drawings throughout the book were created by people who were afraid they could never draw the way they wanted to. The children's art was not created by gifted children. These drawings were done by regular kids who were given the kind of safe environment we have been discussing, as well as the information on how to see and explore, which you will receive in the chapters that follow.

The typical symbolic stick figure drawings that you see on page 20 are the type of drawings that children all over the

world do naturally, and children should be given time to develop this activity by themselves. Such drawing is important for self-expression and language development and should not be compared to realistic drawing. As children think about a car and draw two circles for the wheels and a straight line between them for the car, they are creating the symbol for a car. Realism is not important, since children are simply communicating ideas to themselves. As they express these ideas, they have a running dialogue going on in their mind. For example, as they draw the symbol for the car and a stick figure of themselves, they are saying such things as, "This is me getting in the car with Daddy to go to the store." Linking words to objects and ideas to sentence structure is occurring in their inner vision as they draw. They are unconcerned about what the marks on the paper look like. I suggest that you be as unconcerned. You can let them talk about their pictures, but it is inappropriate to focus on realistic interpretation of the images. This experience is about communication of ideas, not artistic achievement. Drawing is a nonverbal language; it implements the acquisition of any primary spoken language that is being developed.

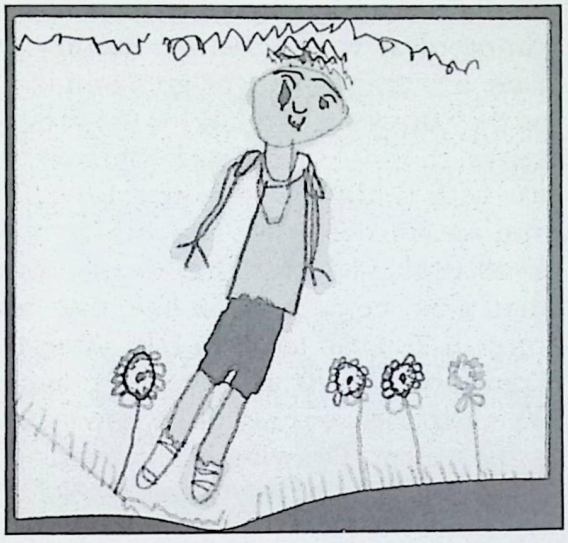
The realistic drawings that also appear on page 20 can be achieved by all children as well, if given the guidance and basic information contained in these lessons. It can be introduced to four- or five-year-olds and not conflict with a child's ability to continue symbolic expression and primary language development. They can draw symbolically whenever they have free time and realistically during planned and guided drawing sessions. At around eight or nine, children will naturally give up symbolic styles of drawing and want to draw realistically. Only a rare few are able to do so by themselves, however, because symbolic drawing does not naturally evolve into realistic drawing. Realistic drawing is a completely different subject. Except for the rare few, children need instruction in the basics in order to achieve realism to their satisfaction. There isn't any reason children can't enjoy both styles of drawing through their early childhood development. The only time I have seen a child have difficulty is when an adult shows partiality for one style over the other or compares them for some reason.

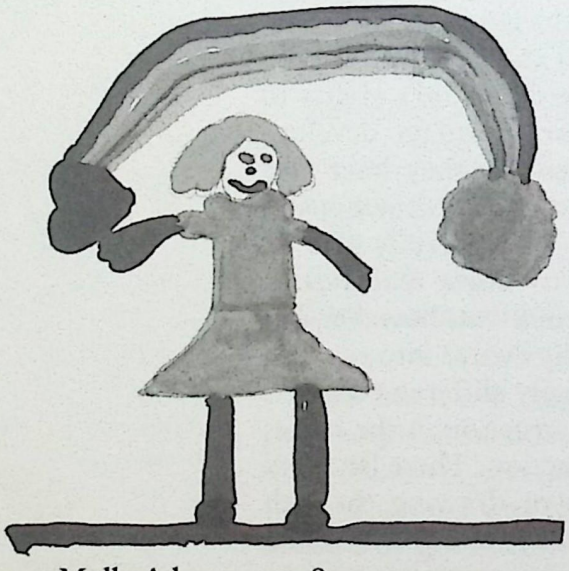
Rather than being limited to stick-figure drawing, children who also draw realistically are building visual perception, concentration, and problem-solving abilities along with language

development. When they give up symbolic drawing they can easily make the transition into the creatively sophisticated styles of drawing done by older teens and adult artists they wish to emulate. If children can learn to draw in this way, so can you. I encourage you to put your doubts aside and watch the transformation take place.

Brian Solari—age 4
Right: Symbolic self-portrait he did on his own.

Far Right: Realistic guided lesson on same day. His skill in realism increased each year, and he also continued the important symbolic experiences until age nine.





Molly Adams—age 9
Symbolic drawing she did on her own.

After six months of instruction, Molly was able to expand her rendering ability and also draw with realistic interpretations and complex detail.

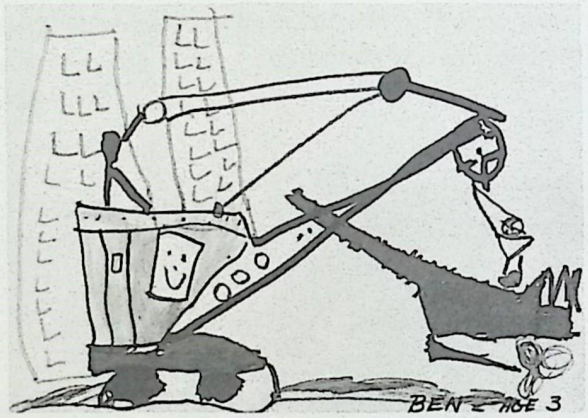
Alexandra Salkeld—age 7
Alexandra looked into the mirror and created this self-portrait on her own.

On the same day, Alexandra received the instruction in Lesson 5 on how to draw faces and saw herself with retrained eyes. She easily accomplishing this drawing.

Donna Albertson—age 7
Donna looked in the mirror as she drew herself. Without instruction in visual observation, she could only use stick-figure symbols that were familiar to her.

Immediately afterward, she was given the information you will find in Lesson 5 and redrew herself with newfound realism.

TYPICAL TWO- AND THREE-YEAR-OLD SYMBOLIC DRAWINGS AND SCRIBBLINGS



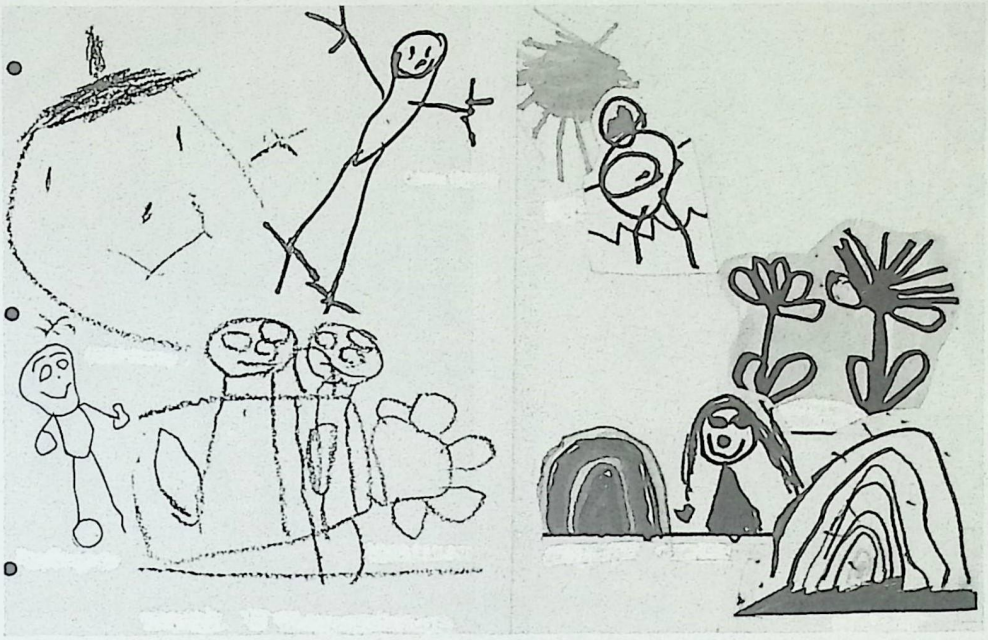
Ben Pfister—age 3

Eric Russell—age 2

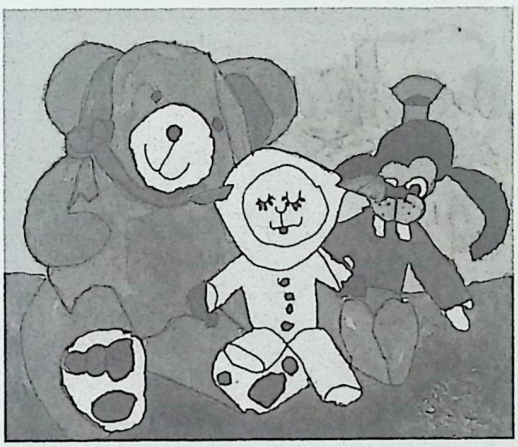
TYPICAL TWO- AND THREE-YEAR-OLD REALISTIC DRAWINGS AFTER INSTRUCTIONS

Not all two- or three-year-olds are ready to draw realistically, but as soon as their motor coordination allows them to duplicate the five elements of contour shape, they can understand how to render what they see.

Josh Ifergan—age 3



TYPICAL FOUR-YEAR-OLD STICK-FIGURE AND SYMBOLIC DRAWINGS

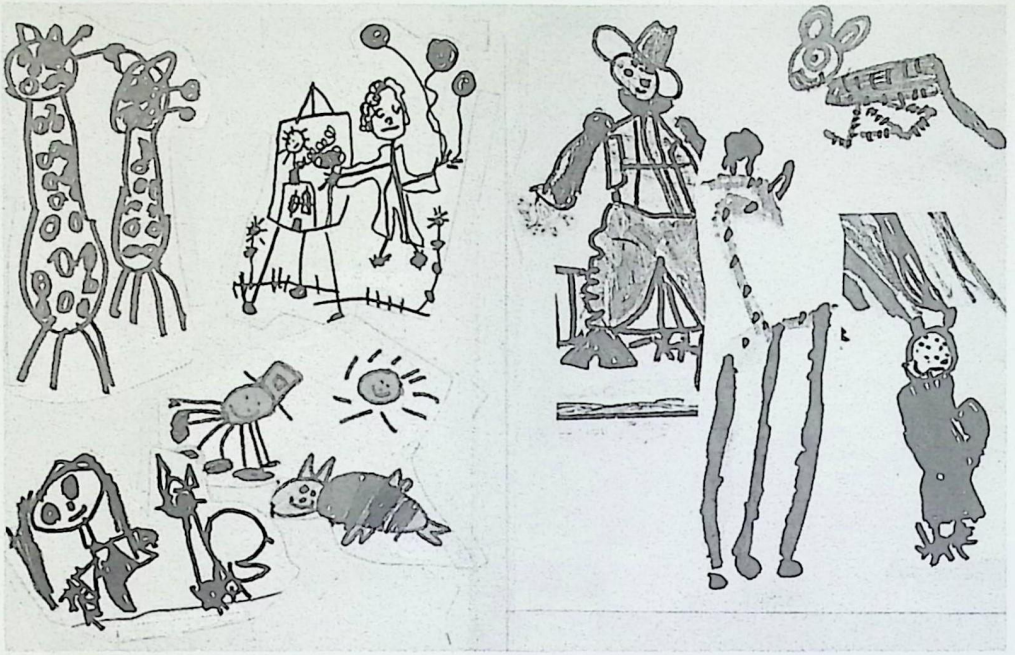


Sable Snyder—age 4

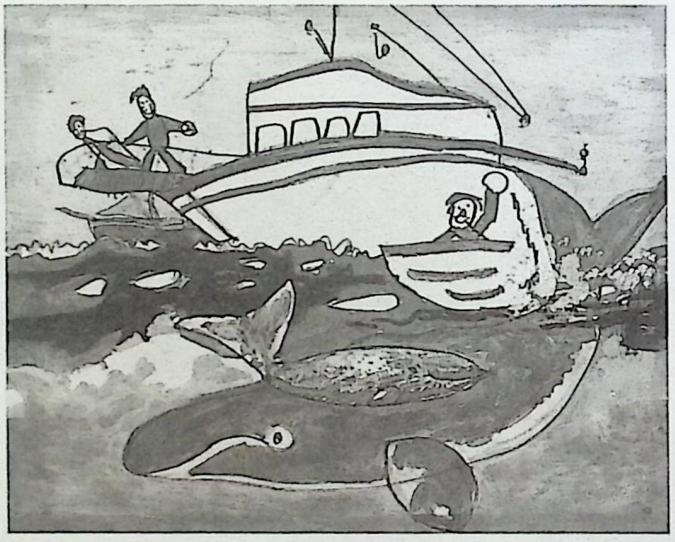
TYPICAL FOUR-YEAR-OLD REALISTIC DRAWINGS AFTER INSTRUCTION

Most four-year-olds are ready for instruction. They understand the process but may have to wait a little for their motor coordination to develop. By four and a half it is rare that they are not ready. Of course, it is important not to rush them. You may begin the visual perception games until they can duplicate the five basic elements of shape.

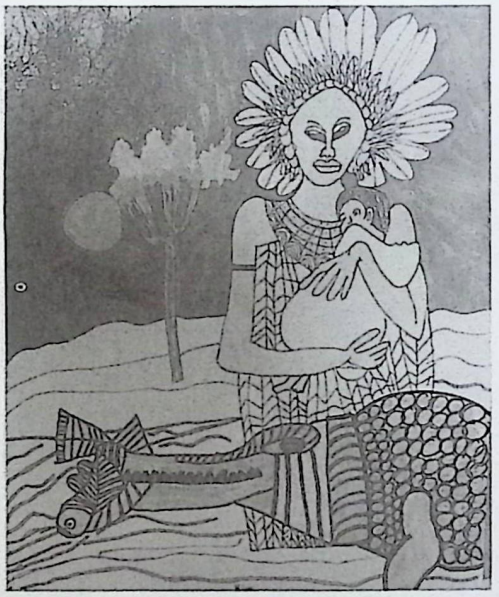
Tocaloma preschooler—age 4



TYPICAL FIVE-YEAR-OLD STICK-FIGURE AND SYMBOLIC DRAWINGS



Tocaloma preschooler—age 5



Kim Balin—age 5

TYPICAL FIVE-YEAR-OLD REALISTIC DRAWINGS AFTER INSTRUCTION

All five-year-olds are ready to add the joy of representational drawing to their lives. They will continue to draw stick figures and wonderful symbolic images by themselves until eight or nine years of age. Symbolic drawing is a natural process, but does not lead to drawing realistically. Teaching the basics of realistic drawing does not interfere with free symbolic expression. The two are different subjects, and you can encourage them both.

Setting the Stage

Part of being able to create is having an enjoyable space in which to work with the kind of supplies that will facilitate success. In setting the stage we will create a comfortable space and a conducive mood, go shopping for supplies, and get inspired to begin a collection of drawing projects.

Preparing Your Work Space

It is highly recommended that all the people who are going to be drawing together take part in the planning. Encourage a process by which you openly communicate ideas concerning the arrangement of the space and the type of mood you will need for concentration and creativity.

Arranging the Space Together

Whether you are a schoolteacher creating a classroom setting or a parent setting up a space at home, the same factors need to be considered. You will be creating a different arrangement depending on the number of people who will be drawing.

- *Demonstration area.* In the classroom you will need to have a large area on the wall. The ideal surface is a corkboard on which you can pin large pieces of butcher paper for demonstration and have plenty of room left over for graphic ideas and sample drawings. If all you have is a chalkboard, use masking tape to hang up large pieces of butcher paper. Chalk

does not adapt well to the process of drawing, so you will need to demonstrate in marker or other media on paper. Overhead projectors are okay for simple abstract line drawings, but when you want to demonstrate color, realism, or shading they are inadequate. At home you simply want a space next to the child that allows her to see your demonstration of ideas. In either setting, have a tall table or rolling cart available to set up a still life or objects to be drawn.

- *Seating and drawing surface.* The tables in a classroom need to be arranged in a way that will allow all the students to face the demonstration area. When choosing a space at home you'll need a flat table surface. Have small children in chairs or booster seats that allow them to sit comfortably without being up on their knees or reaching up to the surface. Make a mat out of white tag board or heavy paper that will keep marker inks from bleeding through onto the table and will serve as a place to test colors.

- *Neatness.* You will be learning how to see the shapes of things and looking at a lot of visual data. Visual clutter can make it impossible for most people to focus. It is important to remove all items that do not relate to the drawing process. Have the children in a classroom remove all textbooks and other papers from their desks and clean away all the pinned-up work and bulletin-board items that surround your demonstration area. If you are working at home at the kitchen table, take time to clean everything off first. Trying to draw in the midst of newspapers, toasters, and dishes will cause too many distractions.

- *Lighting.* Bring in as much light as possible. If you are using lamps at home, make sure they are in a direction that does not cause the hand or the body to cast a shadow on the paper.

- *Access to materials.* Have a system that eliminates as much as possible the need to get up and down. Searching for supplies causes a break in concentration that isn't conducive to success. At home it is best if you can create a permanent space, where the supplies are always out. This will encourage consistent involvement and independent work.

- *Traffic flow.* In the classroom you want to create the ability to move around without disturbing others. The secret is to keep the silence rule enforced even when students get up to get supplies or look at another's work. At home the challenge is to keep others from moving through your space or distracting you. Make it a rule that no one come into the area or interrupt you when you and your child are drawing.

Creating the Mood Together

I can't stress enough how important it is to talk with your students first about the kind of mood you are going to create and why. Here are the main points that will help you create an enjoyable environment that also encourages success.

- *Concentration.* Explaining the virtue of silence is not enough. Unless students are motivated to want silence for themselves you will be in an endless battle of wills. Most people have never experienced the pleasure that total silence can be, are uncomfortable with it, and don't even know they would like it. From the minute we awake until the end of day most of us are besieged with noise, blaring music, or a continually running TV. Classrooms have an undertone of whispers, and the moment the teacher is preoccupied the whispers escalate into loud talking. I have as much trouble motivating adults to be comfortable with silence as I do a group of children. Artists know the benefits of silent concentration. I knew that unless I could help students experience this peaceful concentration, they would never have the kind of success they wanted. After trying a variety of approaches, I finally found a system that works. If you can be comfortable with silence yourself, I guarantee the following system will work.

1. *Tell your students or your children the following.* "If you are talking you go 'blind.' Your mind is busy talking and can't see well enough to tell your hand what to do. I know you want to have success with your drawing and you don't realize how badly it can be affected by talking or becoming distracted by others who are talking. I also know it is a very hard habit to break and so I will help you. Unless I am giving instructions, I will not talk myself or encourage you to talk with me about things other than your drawing."

In a classroom you can take it one step further. "I will protect you from others' talking and move people who are having trouble talking to each other. There is no reason to be embarrassed or feel you have done anything wrong if I move you. We all have trouble learning to enjoy silence. I will give you a warning first, and if you still have trouble I will move you away from your talking buddy. I will just take your drawings and move you there, so let's not make a big deal out of it, and we can go on with the lesson without any problems."

2. *Don't make any idle threats.* Be aggressive and diligent about enforcing the silence. It is usually necessary to follow this system very rigidly for a couple of weeks. Once people experience the relief of complete silence and concentration, they love it. Children look forward to this quiet time and won't allow a newcomer to interrupt it. They will expect you to demand this silence for them. You can expect up to an hour or an hour and a half of this kind of total silence from students of any age before they will need a break. The results will show up dramatically in their artwork. They will appreciate focused concentration the way all artists do, and see the differences it makes in their progress.

- *Learning to see.* Build an appreciation for the time you will be taking to learn to see. Explain that the eyes need to train the mind how to look, so that the mind can tell the hand what to do.
- *Planning.* Create an awareness of how much time and frustration can be avoided by being patient, warming up, and planning first.
- *Speed.* Explain that drawing is a subject that doesn't work well if one is too quick to draw before looking, and that you are both going to learn to study things and take your time.
- *Perfection.* Explain how there is no wrong way to draw. Make it clear that you will be learning ways to change things that you feel dissatisfied with and that no one is expected to like everything she draws. Explain that it is natural to be a bit uncomfortable and dissatisfied during any learning process.

- *Feelings.* Encourage the student's freedom to express positive or negative feelings and to ask for help and suggestions. Make assurances that as you learn together you will help each other with your problems and frustrations, and that there is always the option to take a rest and finish later.

Shopping for Supplies

Imagine if you had never bowled before and were dropped off at a deserted bowling alley to play. The essence of bowling may completely escape you if you couldn't watch others use the equipment, find out what the rules of the game are, and practice using the ball. The same is true of the drawing process. No matter what age a student is, he needs to explore the materials and find out how they can be used before beginning to draw.

What to Buy

For the beginner, it is very important to use supplies that assist motor coordination. When you draw in a representational style and are trying to depict the shapes and sizes of things realistically, you need to control the configurations of your marks and lines. Felt-tip markers are excellent for this; they provide the flowing control of line in many different thicknesses, and they allow for color effects similar to the beauty of watercolor. The inability to erase forces the beginner to look at the subject carefully and plan first before drawing—which is appropriate, since looking more accurately is the main challenge. Crayons do not lend themselves to representational drawing because the line is not sharp and smooth and is difficult to control.

Watercolors and brushes are the most difficult drawing media to control, and so for children under eight they are more appropriate for free and loose painting projects. After some drawing confidence is attained, you can do more detailed watercolors with children over eight or nine. Drawing pencils, with all their wonderful shading abilities, can be used after the student learns to see and there is no more danger of becoming dependent on the eraser.

Before I recommend pen and paper supplies for beginners, I want to bring up one point about felt-tip markers. Solvent-based inks give off a strong odor and can cause headaches or other reactions. You have the option of using odorless, water-base inks, but the drawing may fade away very quickly. If you choose to use the indelible inks, which do provide more variety of color and shading and are more permanent, be sure the room is well ventilated.

Beginning Shopping List

Fine- and broad-tipped colored markers. Fine-tipped markers are for drawing, so buy an assortment of the darker colors. Broad-tipped markers are mainly for coloring in, so lean toward lighter shades that blend well together. Buy an assortment of all the colors in the rainbow, with extra shades of blues, greens, and browns for making foliage and skies and water more varied.

This is one time when buying the expensive brands will save you money. The problems with the cheaper markers are that points break easily or become mushy, poorly designed caps can cause pens to dry out sooner, and colors are diluted with water so that the ink streaks and clumps up on the paper. Cheap markers are also very unsophisticated in color range and can severely limit the beauty of a drawing. If you must buy the cheaper pens, supplement your supply with a few of the expensive ones, especially in lighter blues and greens for sky and foliage.

Test the pens in the store to make sure they are not old stock and close to drying up. Make a good one-inch square of color, since a dried-up pen will work for a few strokes even after it is dead. What you are looking for is a smooth wetness. If the pen streaks or makes a squeaky noise, it is probably close to drying out.

Black drawing marker. Since most brands of black ink fade, smear, and turn greenish when touched by nearby colored inks, it is important to find a particular brand that will retain its quality. Be sure to test your choices first by running yellow or light-colored inks next to the black.

Scratch paper. A ream of photocopying paper is about the cheapest available and lets you feel free to do a lot of testing and planning.

Drawing paper. Most art stores carry a medium-priced paper in sketch-pad format. Get the thickest brand available that has a matte finish. Slick or shiny paper will cause a lot of smearing problems.

Where to Shop

Shopping for supplies is part of the creative process. Inadequate supplies can limit your ability to produce the effects you want. Try to develop a relationship with a particular sales clerk who will help you with your needs. Check out the various types of stores that carry drawing or graphics supplies. Prices may vary considerably, so it is worth the extra time to find a reasonably priced store.

Art stores. Traditional art stores carry the better-designed solvent-base and water-base ink markers and a wide variety of drawing papers and graphics supplies in large quantities. But prices range dramatically, so shop around.

Office supply chains, such as Staples and Office Depot. These stores are among the few places where you can find a large assortment of colored construction paper, which is a nice paper for chalk pastels. They carry a wide variety of drawing supplies and papers at much lower prices than art stores.

Large chain paint stores. In most cases, prices here are much lower than in even the chain-type art stores. But take the time to compare the brands, since some stores carry only the cheaper pens.

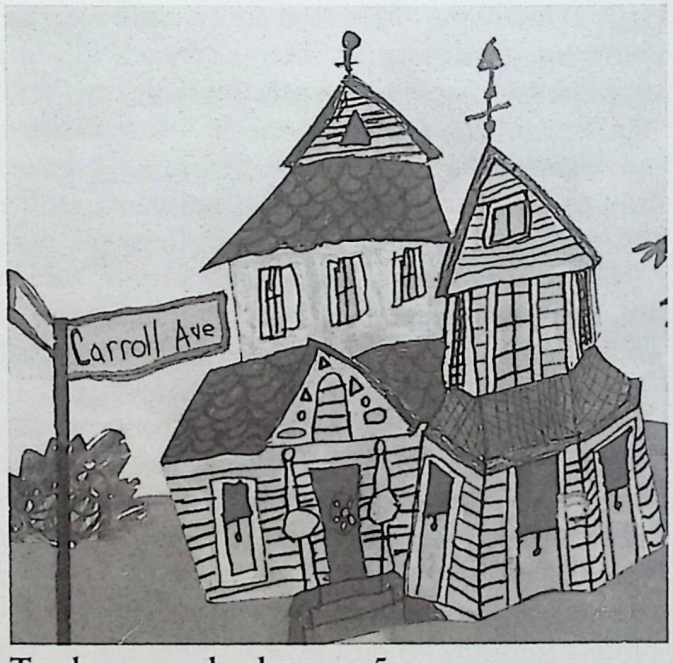
Large drugstores, photocopy chains, and markets. Watch out for narrow selection and limitation to cheaper brands. These are, however, among the best places to find black pens and photocopy paper.

Department stores. Art departments in department stores are on their way out. They tend to carry the better-quality pens you are looking for, but the prices can be much higher than at art stores. Since turnover here can be slower, watch out for old stock.

Ideas for Inspiration: Knowing What's Possible

Most young children in America have observed only the symbolic and stick-figure-type drawings that they and their friends create. They have never had the opportunity to see more fully developed drawings by children their own age. Organizations from other countries may sponsor collections of fine artworks by children, but in the format of contests, prizes, and a competitive atmosphere, and the results are usually not displayed in this country where children get a chance to see them. Some countries' entries include fully developed representational drawings by children as young as six or seven. These are the same types of drawings that Monart students are producing at an even earlier age of four or five. Fifteen years ago the sponsors of such contests reported to me that American children were poorly represented, due to the lack of any structured

Nicholas Christ—age 4



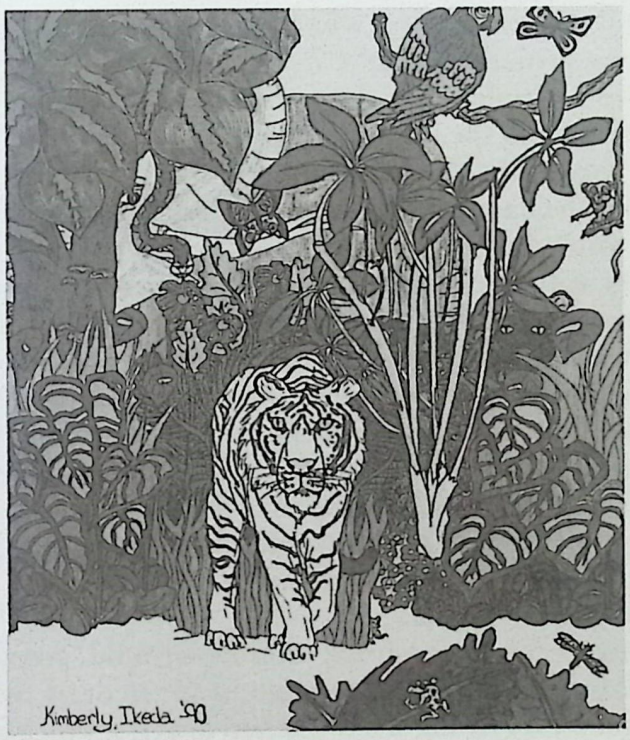
Tocaloma preschooler—age 5

FIG. P.1 *With guidance, very young children can achieve fully developed drawings.*

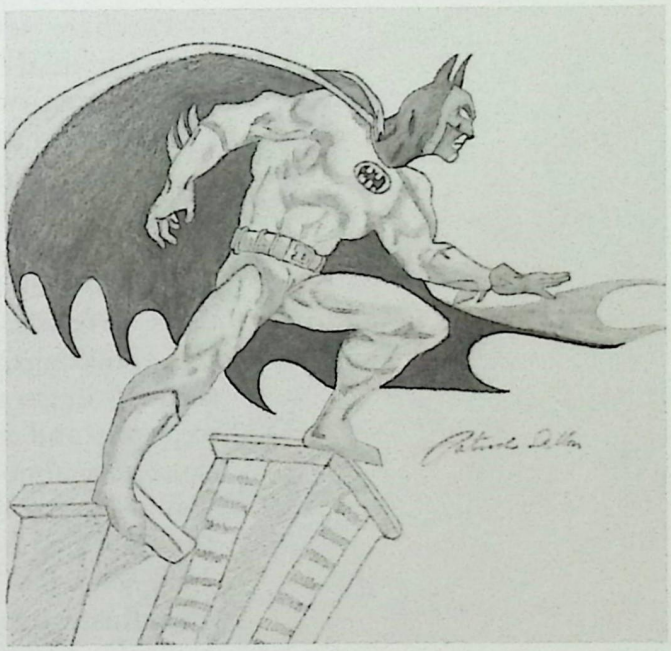
guidance in the field of drawing. I am happy to report that immediately after that, a Monart student placed second in one of these worldwide contests, and every year I hear parents and students talking about how they entered such contests and received recognition and awards.

Since the publication of the first edition of this book, thousands of elementary-school teachers have been using the method and seeing their students achieve very skilled results. If children aren't exposed to this kind of realistic drawing, they don't know it is possible and as a result don't even try to achieve it. The drawings by the four- and five-year-old students (in Fig. P.1) exemplify this more fully developed representational work.

A first "assignment" in preparing children or yourself for the drawing experience is to spend time simply perusing the student exhibitions in this book for inspiration and exposure to what is possible. Even children who are actively drawing and confident about their ability need new ideas and encouragement.



Kimberly Ikeda—age 11



Patrick Dillon—age 12

FIG. P.2 *This type of fully developed work can be achieved by all children, not just the gifted.*

Remember, the type of work in the student exhibit of eleven- to twelve-year-olds in Fig. P.2 does not come from "special" or "gifted" children. The drawings throughout the book are by "regular" kids from all walks of life who have been given guidance on how to draw. You can assure your children and yourself that you can all attain this level of drawing skill.

Sharing Your Feelings

If you still aren't feeling comfortable about your own drawing ability, try admitting this to your students or children and soliciting their support in a team effort. The fact that you let children know that you will have to learn together is never a hindrance. Teachers tell me that their students are even more productive and cooperative when they feel it is a matter of helping each other.

Collecting Things to Draw

Purchase several file folders in which to start collecting your potential future projects. Large X-ray envelopes are great for holding oversized samples of graphic ideas. The only place I know to get them is from the medical supply houses that service hospital and X-ray labs. Call one in your area and speak to the person who is in charge of ordering the clerical supplies. He or she can tell you where to buy them.

Label your files with the major topics that interest you: birds, animals, flowers, sea life, people, transportation vehicles, buildings, landscape scenes, designs, and so on. Look through illustrated books, greeting cards, magazines, or photographs and select images that appeal to you. Don't worry right now about whether a project might be "too hard," since you are going to be much more capable than you think. Save anything that has something in it you would like to be able to draw, even if it is only part of the entire image. Ask friends to save illustrative materials for you.

Begin examining three-dimensional objects around your living space and be aware of things you might want to draw in later projects. Include everything from kitchen articles, knick-knacks, flower arrangements, toys, sports equipment, and

stuffed animals to such larger items as potted palms, bicycles, furniture, cars, and sculpture.

As you get more into the drawing lessons, you will be given specific advice on how to collect and plan projects. There is also an entire chapter in my second book, *Drawing for Older Children and Teens,* on how to plan projects. But there is no need to wait. Start gathering these materials now, and you will be more than inspired for your future drawing adventures.

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MONA BROOKES is an internationally acclaimed art educator and founder of the Monart Drawing Schools. She is a keynote speaker at educational conferences and gives workshops in school districts nationwide. Her second book, *Drawing for Older Children & Teens*, has been adopted in many public school upper-grade-level art programs. She lives in Ojai, California.

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PENGUIN GROUP (USA) INC.
penguinrandomhouse.com
U.S.A $21.00 9606
Canada $28.00

ISBN 978-0-87477-827-4
9 780874 778274 52100