

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL)

Course Title

Visual Perception and Art: A survey across the cultures.

Lecture-06

Child art

by

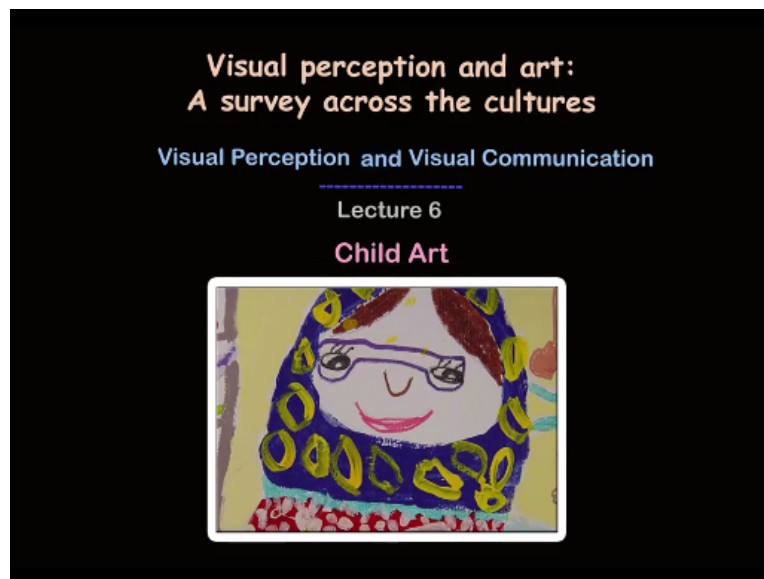
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Visava – Bharathi

Hello viewers welcome to mooks online course on visual perception and art a survey across the cultures today we have the lecture number 6.

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And this lecture is precisely on child art now ask the term child art itself suggests we are going to look at the art made by children created by children as not only examples of a very fascinating subject and because of the creativity and imagination and technical freedom exercised in their art but our interest as far as this particular course is concerned is to look at child art from the point of visual perception. What kind of visual perceptions on what is the role of this initial perception in the making of child art.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:21)

Two key terms used very frequently in the context of child art are:

1. Imagination
2. Creativity

However, both these aspects are integral to the process. Thought process and making process. Neither Creativity nor Imagination is predetermined or preset. No matter how talented a child is, both Creativity and Imagination are gifts of the process.

Now the two key terms used very frequently in the context of child are one imagination and two creativity however both these aspects are integral to the process the technical process the very physical process of making a painting the thought process the mental process the perceptual process through which a child reconstructs the visual world, through which a child reimages the visual world through which a child creates an entirely new visual world for their own sake, so it is the process that plays a key role in creating or driving what we call imagination or what we call creativity.

So thought process and making process both these processes are very important to understand child are visibly visual perception neither creativity nor imagination is predetermined or preset no matter how talented a child is both creativity and imagination are gifts of the process itself.

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Children's creative thought is bolstered by the fact that "the young child is not bothered by inconsistencies, departures from convention, nonliteralness . . . which often results in unusual and appealing juxtapositions and associations" .



Children's creative thought is bolstered by the fact that the young child is not bothered by inconsistencies departures from convention or non literalness which often results in unusual and appealing juxtapositions and associations in other words unless and until a child gets completely tutored or trained in a particular method of making art we find her or him in a state of endless freedom where the child does not feel any hesitation to make any kind of juxtaposition either of forms or of colors to make any kind of exaggerations of forms or colors to create most unusual visual constructs which nobody has ever seen before.

Now all these things happen because at the foundation a child is actually free in terms of exercising certain freedom in terms of exercising certain liberty of making art and that is exactly why I was referring to this fact that we would not be able to understand the visual perception a child gets involved in while making us unless we take it into account that the mechanical process and the mental process both these processes are very important for the child to allow their freedom and creativity to grow.

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Now look at this painting by a child and this painting ass full of faces of various kinds looking at these faces from a very conventional point of view this faces may look very ugly but for a child these sessions are not ugly they are extremely colorful expressions, now this is where the visual perception gets connected to the emotional expression in a child art we shall see more of it later.

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For them, visual perception is not normative, not a matter of allegiance to certain expectations. But rather a matter of adventure and discovery.



The for children visual perception is not normative that you have a set of rules or prescriptions and you follow those rules this is the what a child usually would do it is not a matter of allegiance to a certain expectations either but rather a matter of adventure and discovery, so when you study visual perception in child art what you notice almost at the outset is not only an immense amount of freedom and liberty that children exercise in their art but also a spirit of adventure and spirit of discovery and this is exactly where a child does not really need to follow any preset principles of visual perception.

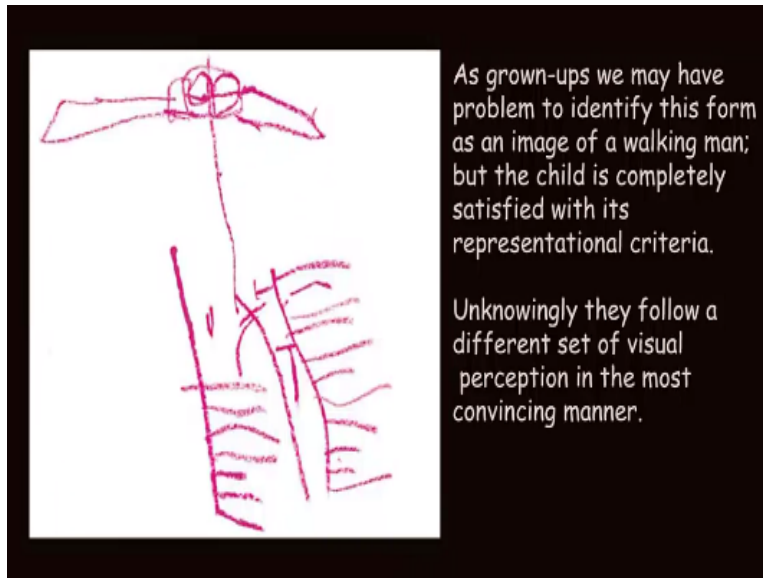
They can create their own visual perception they can create their own visual logic they can create their own visual world and this creation is important because it also allows us to have a glimpse to have a kind of knowledge about how the visual perception works in their mind in their eyes in their imagination.

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So when you look at a painting like this it is basically the juxtaposition of very strong colors it is basically an unusual juxtaposition of space or construction of space that these elements make these paintings very, very powerful and visually very appealing and it is something that as grown-ups we as artists would not even dare to do and even if we do we first need to unlearn what we have learnt in our art colleges and art institutions and then get back to the freedom that a child exercises in his or her art.

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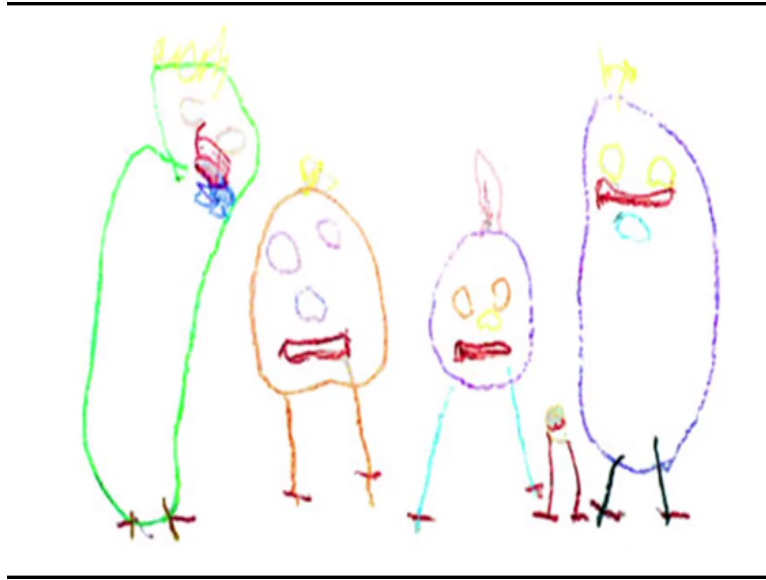
Now when you look at a particular drawing like this a drawing by a very small child but as grown-ups we may have problem to identify this form as an image of a walking man but when this particular child was asked what did he do in this drawing what did he actually draw at once he replied that it was a walking man, so we have to follow him we have to pay attention to him and accept that yes it is an image of a walking man.

But it is not really very easy for us to identify this image as a figure of a walking man but the child on the other hand seems to be completely satisfied with its representational criteria and this is where visual perception or certain aspects of visual perception in child get connected to representational criteria or representational norm in child art because what is expected as the accurate correct or proper representational norms in order to make the representation of a certain object or figure convincing acceptable it is not something that a child follows.

A child usually evolves discovers its own representational norms you may say that it happens because the child is yet to learn certain matured tricks or techniques of visual representations yes, you are to some extent but there is also a stage let us say till the age of 5 or 6 when a child actually it is not that he or she would not be able to pick up these techniques but they refuse to pick up those techniques because they are already living in a world of visual perception where these quote-unquote accurate representational techniques are not required yet. So unknowingly these

children follow a different set of visual perception and they follow it in a very convincing manner.

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Now look at this it is still identifiable for us that these five figures are five representations of five persons probably a family but then we find that the apart from the head the rest of the body is so synoptic so minimum it is so suggestive that the child does not bother to make the legs and the arms and the body look three-dimensional or having volumes he or she simply lives at the stage of what we call a certain kind of symbolism, so this is interesting that as far as visual perception is concerned in child are at very early stage we notice the birth of symbolism something similar to what we notice also in the history of art.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:20)

However, a thorough study of the way a child evolves in her/his art practice reveals a few exciting aspects of visual perception.

As a result of the child study movement in the early 1900s, it is generally recognized that children progress through certain stages of development in their art making.

Each stage may be identified by certain characteristics that show up repeatedly in their artwork.

These stages have been linked to chronological age (particularly from 18 months to 6 years).

However, a number of factors (both internal and external) affect a child's artistic development. Hence, their visual perception is anything but constant!

However a thought of study of the way a child evolves in her or his art practice reveals a few exciting aspects of visual perception as a result of the child study movement in the early 1900 it is generally recognized that children progress through certain stages of development in their art making in other words the evolution or development of childhood is not arbitrary or random though when you look at individual works of child art they might look arbitrary or random but when you look at the whole history or evolution of child art it is not arbitrary or random.

One notices certain stages of development each stage may be identified by certain characteristics that show up repeatedly in their art work so there is a pattern that one discovers particularly art historians and child psychologists they have certainly observed certain patterns and that is like they are able to come up with this certain theories of development of child, now these stages has been linked to the chronological age particularly from 18 months when a child is a toddler to six years.

However a number of factors both internal and external affect a child's artistic development for example social factor, family factor, cultural factors, environmental factors and also the historical or political environment may play a crucial role in altering this history of evolution of child in certain cases hence their visual perception is anything but constant and that is exactly the reason why we say that in child art is spite of very thorough study of the development of child art we can never say that the visual perception is a constant factor it is highly variable unpredictable and full of surprises.

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Most of the theories on child art propose a similar pattern of development—one of progressing from scribbling to representation.

Other generalizations that may be made include:

- Socio-economic factors seem to have little influence on the earliest stages. For example, all children begin drawing by scribbling. Moreover, girls and boys tend to draw alike at the early ages.

- Children's drawings typically show greater development than paintings because crayons, markers, and pencils are easier to control than paint and a brush.

- Considerable overlap exists between stages. Two stages may be represented in one work and a child may regress to a previous stage before advancing to the next stage.

- It is unlikely that a child will reach the later stages without adult support or instruction. In other words, development in art is not universal and is dependent on the environment in which a child grows up and is educated.

So most of the theories on child art propose a similar pattern of development that is one of progressing from scribbling to more or less convincing representations. Other generalizations that may be made include: one socio-economic factor seems to have little influence on the earliest stages; for example, all children begin drawing by scribbling, no matter the social background they come from, irrespective of their geographical or cultural backgrounds. Moreover, girls and boys tend to draw alike at the early ages.

Whereas that might change and we might notice a gendered kind of division or distinction when the girls and boys grow up, children's drawings typically show greater development than paintings because crayons, markers, pencils are easier to control than paint and brush. Now this idea can be contested because we have observed in many cases that children are equally adventurous with paint and brush as much as they are with crayon or pencils or markers or pastels.

So I mean these are not extremely watertight kinds of theories for certain observations and based on those observations, psychologists have come up with certain theories, but then we can always modify these theories based on our own observations. Now it is also said that considerable overlap exists between the stages; two stages may be represented in one work and a child may regress to a previous stage before advancing to the next stage. So it may not always be in a linear

pattern there can be some kind of up and down or to and fro between the various stages depending on the mentality of tendency of a particular child.

It is unlikely that a child will reach the later stages without adult support or instruction in other words development in art is not universal and is dependent on the environment in which a child grows up and is educated this is definitely true because when we talk about visual perception often we tend to make people believe or see visual perception as something that is universal or constant this is not true depending on the social and other environmental factors the development of child and by that same token the evolution of child art can vary from country to country from time to time.

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All young children take great pleasure in moving a crayon or pencil across a surface and leaving a mark.

This form of mark making or "scribbling" represents children's first self-initiated encounters with art.



Now we were talking about scribbles and how a child that usually begins with scribbles all young children take great pleasure in moving a crayon or a pastel or a pencil across the surface it could be a paper or a wall or anything or floor or your bed sheet or carpet, so for them it is not important that they get a kind of conventional surface like paper or canvas anything can be a surface and that is why toddlers or very young kids with crayon and markers can create a evoke in their house.

Now so but this form of marketing or scribbling represents children's first self initiated encounters with art so when we see scribbling they may not make much sense in the first instance because they may look absolutely nonsensical and without any content at such and which is true scribbles do not have any content within it but scribbling is extremely important for a child to make itself very familiar with the very act of drawing or painting and without scribbling a child cannot move on to the next stage.

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Children typically begin scribbling around one-and-a half years of age. Most observers of child art believe that children engage in scribbling not to draw a picture of something; rather they do so for the pure enjoyment of moving their arms and making marks on a surface.

Recently, however, a few researchers have challenged this traditional view by showing that young children do occasionally experiment with representation even though their scribbles may not contain any recognizable forms.

This new perspective suggests that children's earliest mark-making activities may be more complex than previously thought.

Children typically begin scribbling around one and a half years of age would be earlier in certain cases most observers of child art believe that children engage in scribbling not to draw a picture of something rather they do so for the pure enjoyment of moving their arms and making marks on a surface, so in that sense scribbling is definitely a form of art but more than that it is a form

of playing for a child it is a play time it is not art making or the creative time or very, very young kids.

Now recently however a few researchers have challenged this traditional view by showing that young children do occasionally experiment with representation even though their scribbles may not contain any recognizable forms so this is where again the visual perception or general notion of visual perception is found at stake what we as adults or grown-ups considered as mere scribbles may contain some representational idea even if it is not visually very clear, so how do we know that we have to talk to the children we have to talk to that particular child who has made it.

And by talking or kind of interacting with her or him we may find out that what looked like mere scribbling happens at random arbitrary meaningless scribbling may have some representational whose cues and clues hidden in it or intended at least now this new perspective suggests that children's earliest mark making activities may be more complex than previously thought.

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She look at the scribbling obviously description does not make any sense if we are to look at some meaning of the scribbling of if we are to look at some content of this painting of if we are to look at some subject matter in this meeting it is merely a scribbling but who knows this scribbling which is apparently meaningless may have some representational clues hidden in it.

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And to know that we need to talk to the children or for that matter anything that is apparently abstract may look like or may be considered as something that has a life or have a representational life, now particularly these objects which are the found objects from nature or dry leaves and pretty abstract in their pattern and but a child picks up these things and she claims that she can actually see a whole lot of things in this apparently abstract object.

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Now she claims that because visual perception for her is not just about interpreting what she see but it is also about investing certain objects with new meanings and this is what we had discussed in one of our earlier lectures that visual perception is a give-and-take process you receive but you also give back and this is what exactly the children do.

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So when you look at the activities of children then you can make out the process a visual perception is involved in while a child or a group of children is involved in the making of art.

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It is evident that a certain kind of abstract sensibility works in children very strongly.



So it is evident that a certain kind of abstract sensibility works in children very strongly.

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When children first start scribbling they usually don't realize they can make the marks do what they want. They often scribble in a random fashion by swinging their arms back and forth across the drawing surface. The lines they make may actually go off the paper. They may even look away from the page as they work. But, it doesn't take long for children to recognize the relationship between their movements and the marks on the paper. As this discovery unfolds, children begin to control their scribbles by varying their motions and by repeating certain lines that give them particular pleasure. Longitudinal marks in one or more directions may result. Circular patterns and geometric shapes begin to appear as children's perceptual and motor abilities increase. Lines are combined with shapes to form various patterns and designs. Letterforms, especially those in the child's name, may show up among the marks on the page.

So when children first start scribbling they usually do not realize they can make the marks do what they want they often scribble in a random fashion by swinging their arms back and forth across the drawing surface the lines they make may actually go off the paper they may even look away from the page as the work but it does not take a long time for children to recognize the relationship between their movements and the marks on the paper as this discovery unfolds children begin to control their scribbles by varying their motions and by repeating certain lines that give them particular pleasure.

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Now there is one important point here that is the fact that the visual perception in children is somewhat connected to also the motor movement of their arms and the wrist and fingers, so it that makes everything together a very complex phenomena and not very children in this photography you can see slightly grown-up children also find great joy in scribbling beside also making representational paintings.

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As young children become increasingly aware of the world around them, the many objects that make up their environment will begin to appear in their drawings.

These objects are seldom drawn in relationship to one another in position or size. Nor are they organized on the page the way in which they are related spatially in the world.

Instead, objects will typically appear to "float" on the page in the drawings and paintings done by children of preschool age.

So as young children become increasingly aware of the world around them the many objects that make up their environment will begin to appear in their drawings, so it is about making themselves aware of the visual world and it is also about that technical process in which the visual perception finds some visual form these objects are seldom drawn in relationship to one another in position or size nor are they organized on the page the way in which they are related spatially in the world instead objects will typically appear to float on the page in the drawings and paintings done by children of preschool age.

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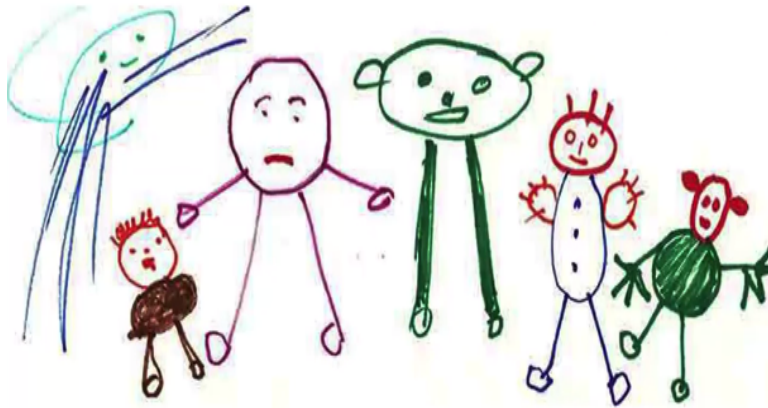
So this is obviously a painting done by a very small child and what once again what they look like meaning listening to us can actually have a very serious kind of content for the child who is making it.

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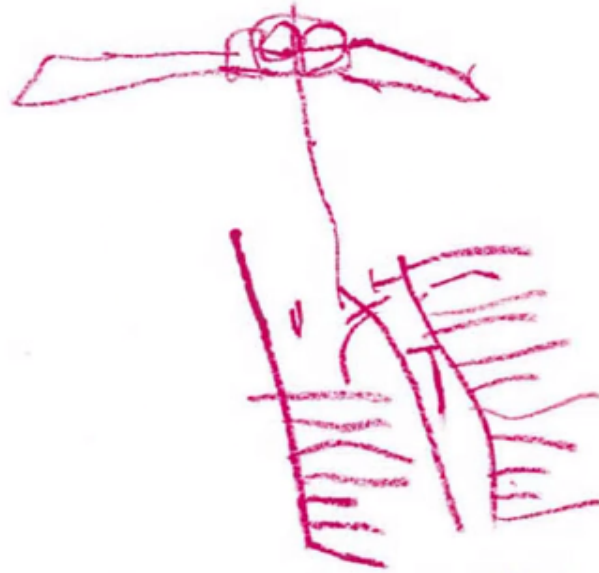
And then from scribbling one moves on to a more representational stage but again very simplistic very straightforward.

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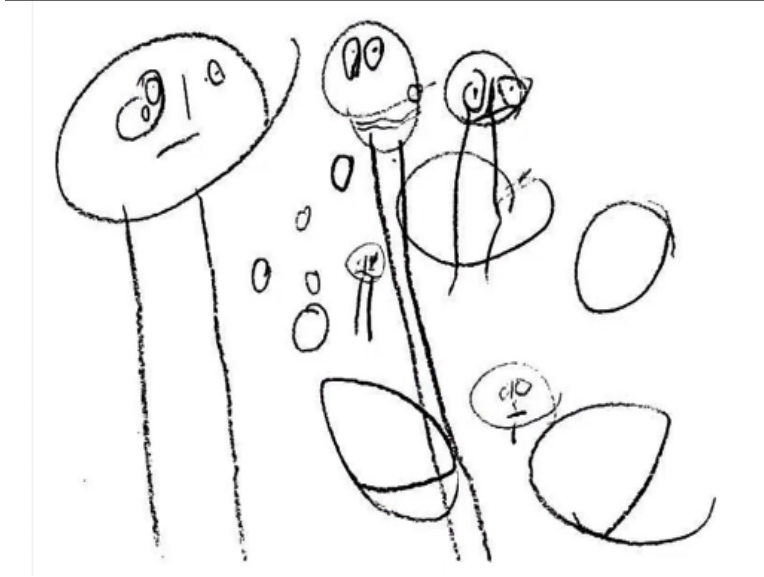
Very synoptic like this one as well.

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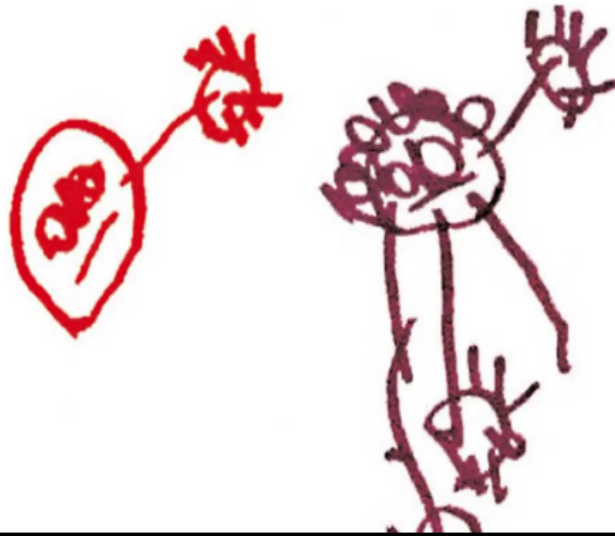
Or this one which we have already seen before or this one.

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So it looks like a very fast rapid kind of drawing done very rapidly in about when you observe a kid doing this kind of drawing you realize that he or she is aware of every month every point every line that he or she is putting on this paper.

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Or this one.

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And then the child learns also naturally or spontaneously learns also to use the rest of the space in a given page so if visual perception then is no more restricted to the object or the bigger it expands itself to cover the entire page on which he or she is doing the drawing.

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So there is the tendency now to fill up the space particularly when one is working with paint.

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Or for that matter this one.

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Or this one so initially it was all about marks floating on the paper then later on a child also realizes the space around our marks on the figures and begins to fill up those spaces with color.

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The progression from scribbling to corresponding the viewed world to a complex and compact composition is clearly evident in most of the children's artworks.

Visual perception certainly changes, along with the creativity.

But it is always better not see it as a development from immature to mature stage.

In fact each stage demonstrates a different visual perception.

So the progression from scribbling to corresponding images the images corresponding to the viewed world to a complex and very compact composition is clearly evident in the most of the children's art works visual perception then certainly changes along with the creativity but it is always better not to see it as a development from immature to mature stage in fact each stage demonstrates a different visual perception.

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You can keep on looking at various examples of child art and see that in spite of a common pattern of visual perception how child art is also subject to an unimaginable range of variations.

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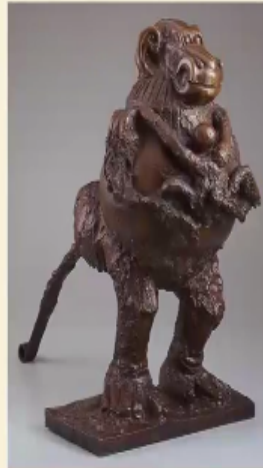
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You can take pictures across the country across the culture and make a kind of survey or map the variations that you observe.

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When Pablo Picasso was asked why his work improved as he grew older, he observed that it had taken him a lifetime to learn to draw as a child, and that "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."



When Pablo Picasso was asked why his work improved as he grew older he observed that it had taken him a lifetime to learn to draw as a child because whereas a very matured artist was missing the visual perception that children usually enjoy then he goes on to say that every child is an artist but the problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up so this is very interesting that on the one hand we want to develop or evolve move away from the very initial formative stages of visual perception but as far as fine artists are concerned many of them like develop the Pablo Picasso it also tends to kind of miss the very potentially very creative kind of visual perception the children usually enjoy in their child art thank you.

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