

Art Adventures in September

As the Orange Room becomes more comfortable with their surroundings at the Nest, they've also become more comfortable with the materials within it. They're still exploring their favorite media such as:

Paint

Drawing

Collaging

Markers

Their choice of media alongside their yearning to communicate further informs their understanding of their environment. This semester will be focused on mark, sign-making and impressions

Classroom Palimpsest

The children are continuing their interest in the shared canvas. Mostly their observations are based on the changing and mixing of color. Check out the progress!



8/25/2021



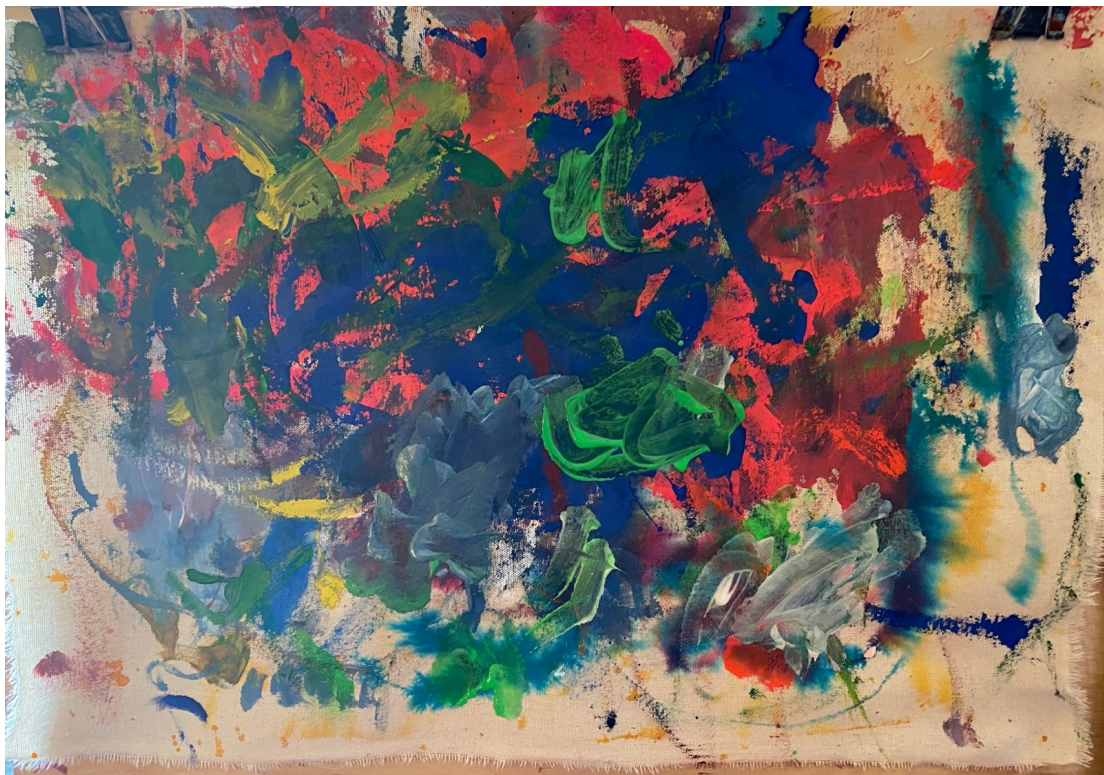
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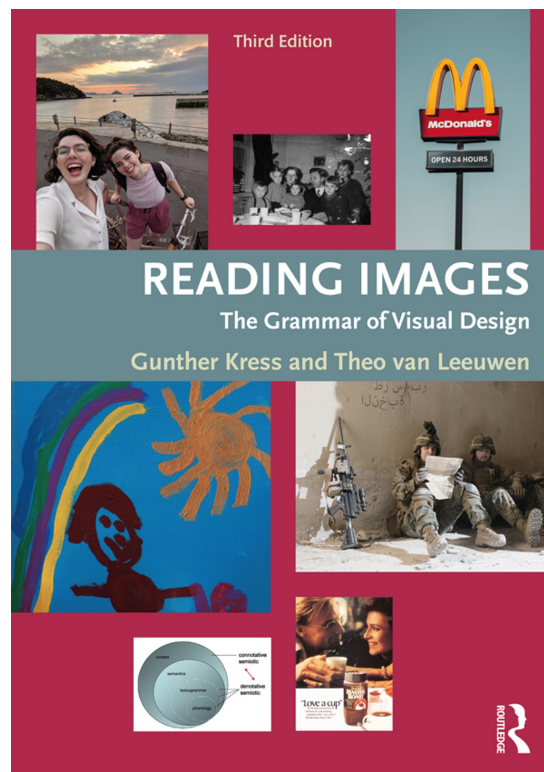
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Drawing & Painting Animals

In order for us to delve deeper into the children's interest in art, eager friends join me frequently in casual drawing lessons. The class was asked if anyone would like to learn how draw things and a few said yes! The primary focus is on breaking down everyday objects and subjects into basic shapes and not the accuracy of the final image. This practice gives them the basic elements needed to express personal ideas and signs through drawing as they grow.

A Thing to Consider...

Semiotics



"Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design" by Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen

A segment of the book examines sign-making from an early age. Here, they look at drawings of wheels created by a three-year-old child. The observations occurred over the span of a few months to watch the development of the child's thinking and how he relayed it through signs. He was provoked to label the circles as wheels because he'd internalized the motion of one through creating it's shape. These are layers of understanding through sensory experience. Feel free to read the following pages:

and ours, as should be clear from our main title, *Reading Images*, which echoes that of the first volume in Fiske's series, *Reading Television* (Fiske and Hartley, 1979).

We would like to begin with an example of what we understand by 'sign-making'. The drawing in figure 0.1 was made by a three-year-old boy. Sitting on his father's lap, he talked about the drawing as he was doing it: 'Do you want to watch me? I'll make a car... got two wheels... and two wheels at the back... and two wheels here... that's a funny wheel...'. When he had finished, he said, 'This is a car.' This was the first time he had named a drawing, and at first the name was puzzling. How was this a car? Of course he had provided the key himself: 'Here's a wheel'. A car, for him, was defined by the criterial characteristic of 'having wheels', and his representation focused on this aspect. What he represented was, in fact, 'wheeliness'. Wheels are a plausible criterion to choose for three-year-olds, and the wheel's action, on toy cars as on real cars, is a readily noticed and describable feature. In other words, this three-year-old's interest in cars was, for him, most plausibly condensed into and expressed as an interest in wheels. **Wheels, in turn, are most plausibly represented by circles, both because of their visual appearance and because of the circular motion of the hand in drawing/representing the wheel's action of 'going round and round'.**

To gather this up for a moment, we see representation as a process in which the makers of signs, whether child or adult, seek to make a representation of some object or entity, whether physical or semiotic, and in which their interest in the object, at the point of making the representation, is a complex one, arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker, and focused by the specific context in which the sign-maker produces the sign. That 'interest' is the source of the selection of what is seen as the criterial aspect of the object, and this criterial aspect is then regarded as adequately representative of the object in a given context. In other words, it is never the 'whole object' but only ever its criterial aspects which are represented.

These criterial aspects are represented in what seems to the sign-maker, at the moment of sign-making, the most apt and plausible fashion, and the most apt and plausible representational mode (e.g. drawing, Lego blocks, painting, speech). Sign-makers thus 'have' a



Fig 0.1 Drawing by a three-year-old child

But the resulting 'langue' (the langue of 'English' or of 'Western visual design') is in the end an artefact of analysis. What exists, and is therefore more crucial for understanding representation and communication, are the resources available to real people in real social contexts. And if we construct a 'langue', a meaning potential for 'Western visual design', then it is no more and no less than a tool which can serve to describe a variety of sign-making practices, within boundaries drawn by the analyst. It follows that we would not draw the line between 'langue' and 'parole' as sharply as it is usually done. **Describing a 'langue' is describing a specific set of semiotic resources available for communicative action to a specific social group.**

Here are some antecedents of the car drawing. Figure 0.2 is a drawing made by the same child, some ten months earlier. Its circular motion is expressive of the child's exuberant, enthusiastic and energetic actions in making the drawing. In figure 0.3, made about three months later, the circular motion has become more regular. The exuberance and energy are still there, but the drawing has acquired more regularity, more interest in shape: 'circular motion' is beginning to turn into 'circle'. In other words, the meanings of figure



Fig 0.2 Drawing by a two-year-old child

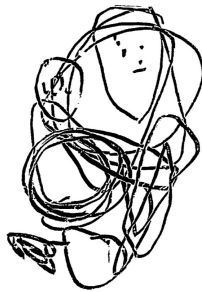


Fig 0.3 Drawing by a two-year-old child

0.2 persist in figure 0.3, transformed, yet with significant continuity: figure 0.3 gathers up, so to speak, the meanings of figure 0.2, and then transforms and extends them.

Figure 0.4, finally, shows a series of circles, each drawn on a separate sheet, one circle to each sheet. The movement from figure 0.2 to figure 0.4 is clear enough, as is the conceptual and transformative work done by the child over a period of fourteen months. Figure 0.4 dates from the same period as figure 0.1. Together the drawings show how the child developed the representational resources available to him, and why circles seemed such an apt choice to him: the expressive, energetic physicality of the motion of figure 0.2 persisted as the child developed this representational resource, so that the circular motion remained part of the meaning of circle/wheel. But something was added as well: the transformation of representational resources was also a transformation of the child's subjectivity, from the emotional, physical and expressive disposition expressed in the act of representing 'circular motion' to the more conceptual and cognitive disposition expressed in the act of representing 'a car'.

Children, like all sign-makers, make their 'own' representational resources, and do so as



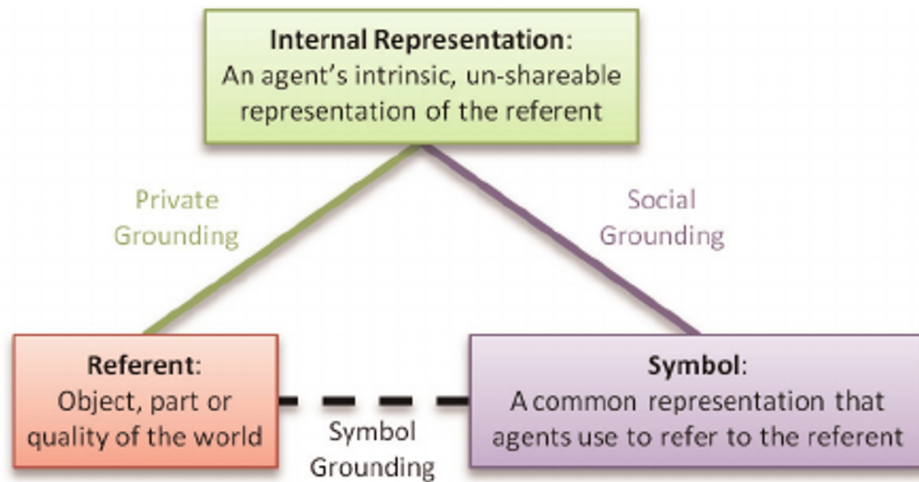
Fig 0.4 Drawing by a three-year-old child

part of a constant production of signs, in which previously produced signs become the signifier-material to be transformed into new signs. This process rests on the *interest* of sign-makers. This transformative, productive stance towards sign-making is at the same time a transformation of the sign-makers' subjectivity – a notion for which there was little place in a 'semiology' which described the relation between signifiers and signifieds as resting on inference or objective resemblance, or on the decrees of the social 'contract'.

We have used children's drawings as our example because we believe that the production of signs by children provides the best model for thinking about sign-making. It applies also to fully socialized and acculturated humans, with the exception of the effects of 'convention'. As mature members of a culture we have available the culturally produced semiotic resources of our societies, and are aware of the conventions and constraints which are socially imposed on our making of signs. However, as we have suggested, in our approach adult sign-makers, too, are guided by interest, by that complex condensation of cultural and social histories and of awareness of present contingencies. 'Mature' sign-makers produce signs out of that interest, always as transformations of existing semiotic materials, therefore always in some way newly made, and always as motivated conjunctions of meaning and form. The effect of convention is to place the pressure of constant limitations of conformity on sign-making; that is, the way signifiers have been combined with signifieds in the history of the culture, acts as a constantly present constraint on how far one might move in combining signifiers with signifieds. Convention does not negate new making; it attempts to limit and constrain the semiotic scope of the combinations.

This, then, is our position vis-à-vis 'European' semiology: where de Saussure had (been assumed to have) said that the relation of signifier and signified in the sign is arbitrary and conventional, we would say that the relation is always motivated and conventional. Where he had seemingly placed semiotic weight and power with the social, we wish to assert the effects of the transformative role of individual agents, yet also the constant presence of the social: in the historical shaping of the resources, in the individual agent's social history, in

"Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design", 3 Year-old Child's Drawings, Pages 7-12



Triangle of Reference, Charles Kay Ogden & I.A. Richards, 1934

At their request, we started with learning how to draw gorillas:



Hatching* was taken from the example drawing and was a common symbol used to represent the gorilla within the group.

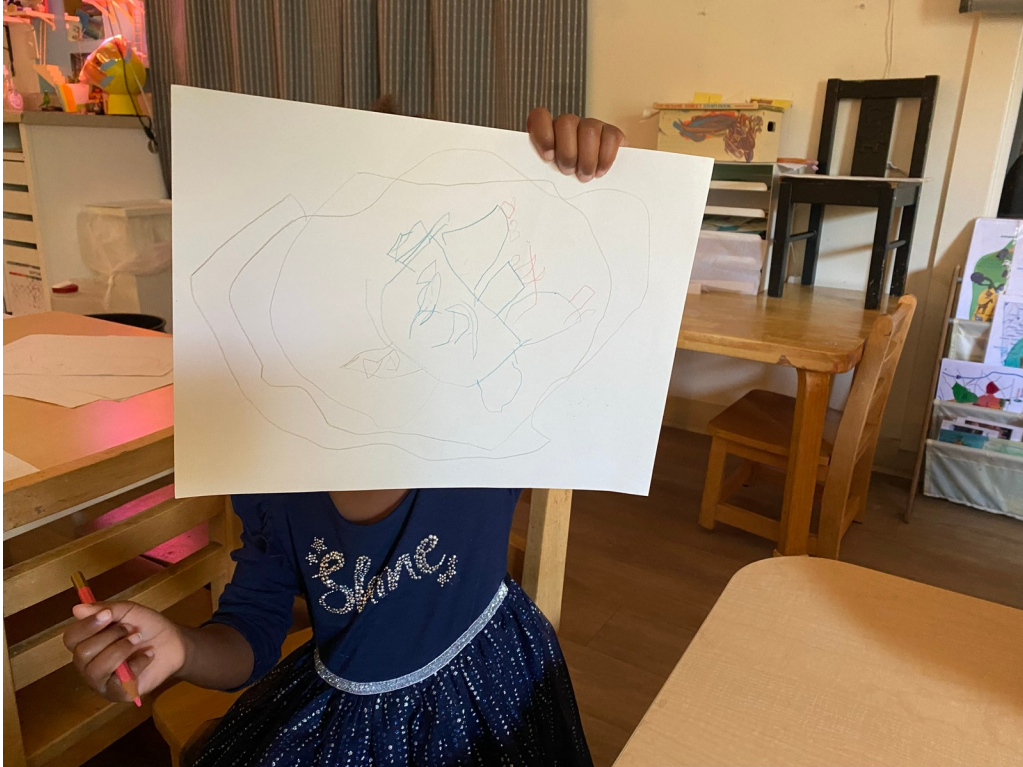
**(lines used to create texture, volume, form & light)*



Nina



Vell



Karter



Stella

Although there was an image highlighted on the easel board alongside a how-to book, it was not seen as the "correct" way to draw a gorilla. Mitigating the example image inherently validates their representations, thus, naturally encouraging them to keep practicing.

Flamingos

The Orange Room were introduced to the colors of a flamingo, but had creative freedom in structuring one. Nonetheless, we all agreed that they are flamingos.





Karter





MADDIE

Maddie



Nina



Waverly

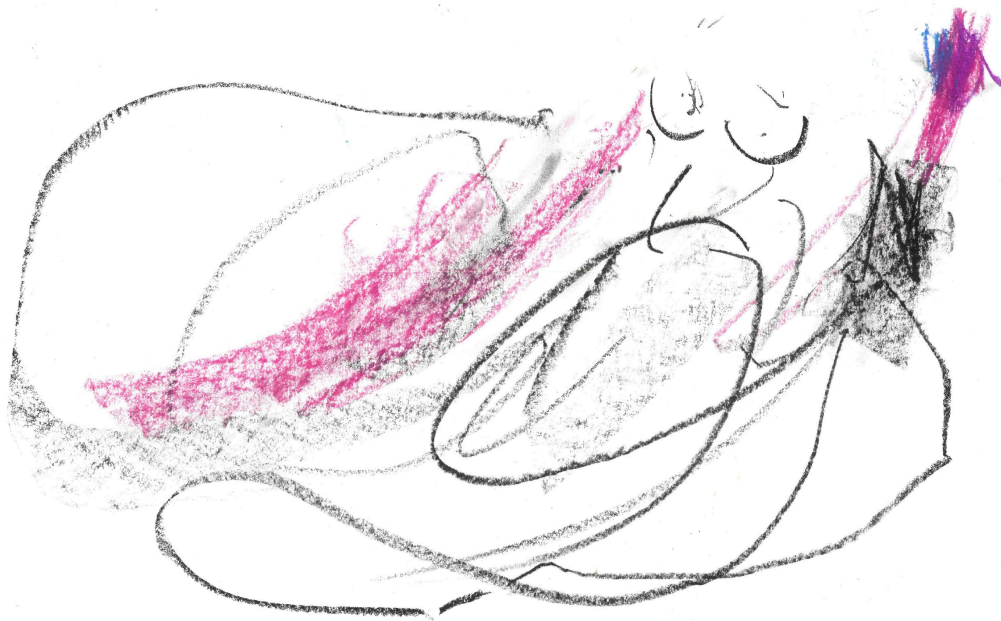
Waverly

Unicorns

This small group agreed "rainbow = unicorn".



Karter



Maddie



Nina



Vell



Lala

Collaging

Collaging, in the 100 Languages, is an avenue for children to create new signs that are specific to the individual child. It is an extension that allows them to piece together basic concepts to create new or familiar ones. Although at times it's hard for us to decipher what they are communicating through their chosen images, their choices are intentional and they are indeed communicating various ideas. Some simple, some complex.



Karter



Irving



Maddie



Waverly

A Thing to Consider...

A subgenre in Surrealism was provoked by sign/mark making and exploring the human condition's unconscious understanding of it through *automatism*.

*"In psychology, "**automatism**" refers to involuntary actions and processes not under the control of the conscious mind—for example, dreaming, breathing, or a nervous tic. Automatism plays a role in Surrealists techniques such as spontaneous or automatic writing, **painting**, and drawing; free association of images and words; and collaborative creation through games..."*

- MoMA



André Masson. *Automatic Drawing*. 1924

Ironically, it is a practice that forces an artist to tap into their inner child. Children inherently enact this technique from the moment they are able to hold a marking utensil. They feel free to move their hand impulsively across any surface. Most times, it's in an attempt to recreate objects or subjects seen in the real world but their current stage in physical development is considered to be lacking by most adults. During our free time in the class, some children draw viscerally and leave behind shapes that resemble nature. That will continue as a form of self-motivated practice.

This has been such a great month for art! Watching our volunteer artists expand their visual communication has been rewarding. Those shown took a natural interest in the materials made available. As new materials are introduced and their values change, more children will be interested in joining. Next month we may start to see more defined representations from those above and emerging languages from newcomers. Look out for the next meditation involving Impressionism as they improve in sign-making and communication.

P.S. We will begin creating art portfolios for the kids to bring home a month at a time. Be on the look out for that as well!

Story date: 28 Sep 2021 . Added by: Natavia Baillow.