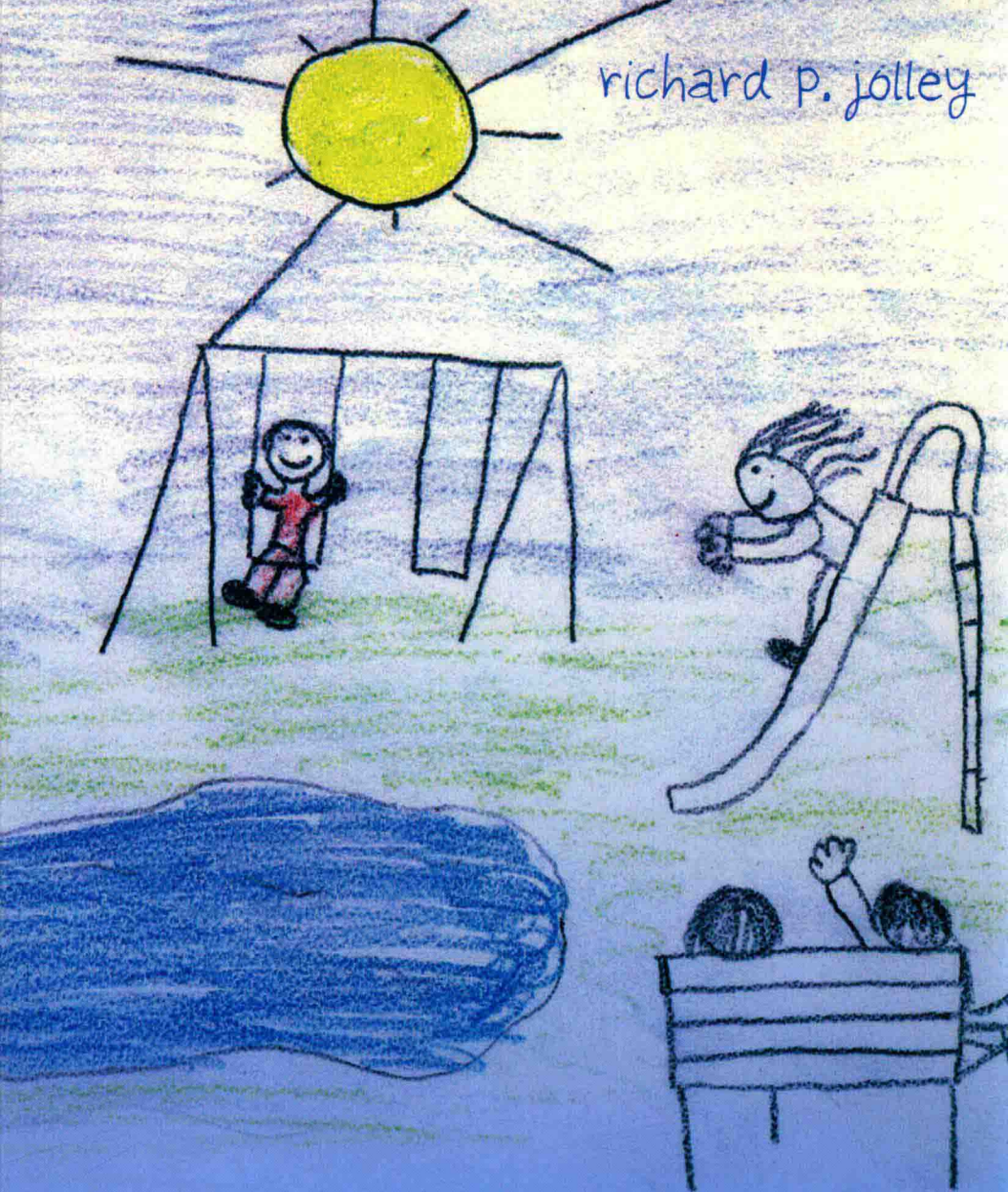


richard p. jolley



# Children & Pictures

*drawing and understanding*

 WILEY-BLACKWELL

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## *Drawing and Understanding*

Richard P. Jolley

 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

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Children and Pictures

## *To Lucy*

... and to all my friends and family who will no longer have to ask, “are you *still* writing that book?”

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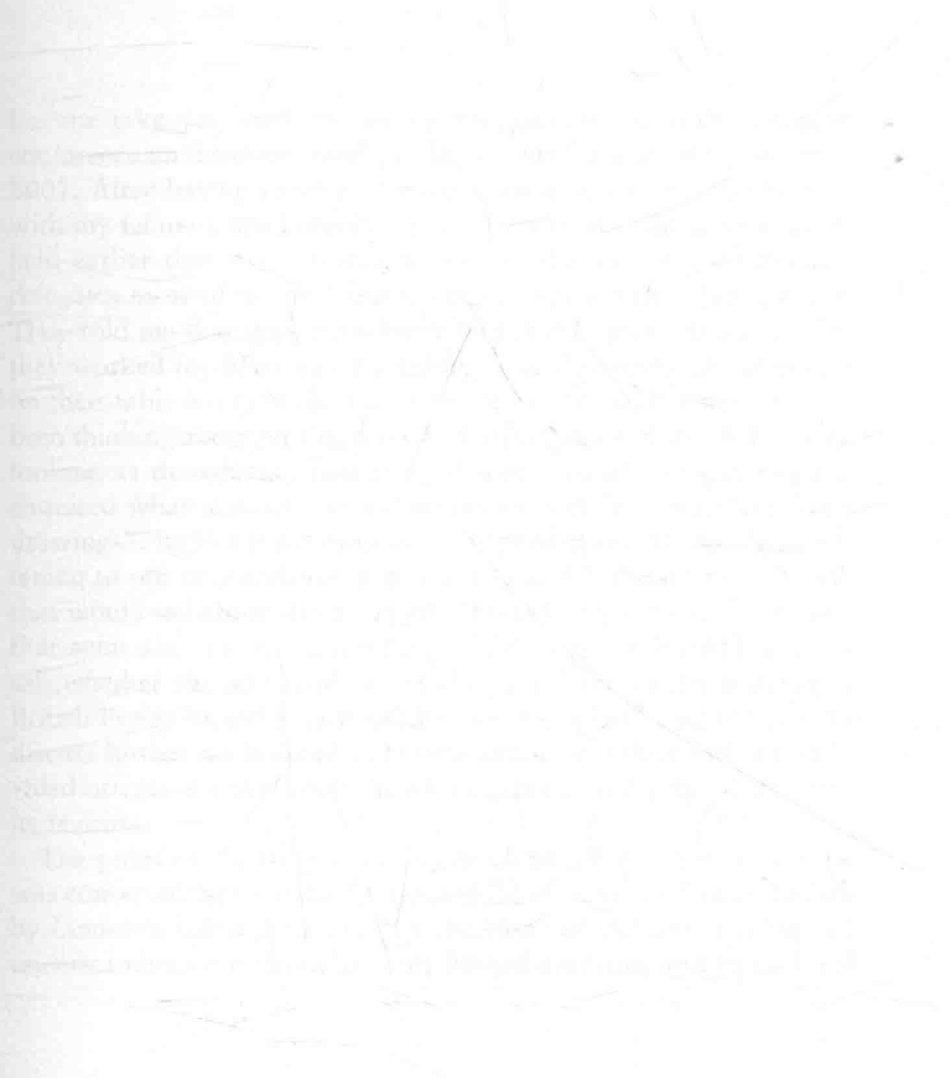
# Plates:

Plate 1: Photo J. Clottes

The author would like to gratefully acknowledge Greasby Infant School, Wirral, UK, for providing the three children's lion drawings

in Plate 1, and Stockport school, UK, for providing two of the children's drawings in Figure 1.6 (top right and bottom right). These drawings were provided at short notice on request of the author for the direct purpose of illustration in this book, and were not part of a research study.

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# Introduction

Let me take you back to one evening during the 10th European conference on developmental psychology held in Uppsala, Sweden in 2001. After having spent a pleasant evening dining at a restaurant with my fellow contributors to a symposium on children's drawings held earlier that day, I joined a nearby table of other conferences delegates most of whom I recognized, except for two young ladies. They told me that they were Sarah Bird and Lindsey Howarth, that they worked for Blackwell Publishing, and that many of the people on their table wrote books for them. I excitedly told them that I had been thinking about writing a book. They appeared interested, despite looking as though they had enjoyed some quantity of alcohol, and enquired what it would be on. To keep it simple I said, "children's drawings". By this point most of those present on the table were listening to our conversation, and heard Lindsey's instant reply, "well, that would sell about three copies!" It was to my surprise, therefore, that soon after returning from the conference, Sarah emailed me to ask whether she and Lindsey could take me out to lunch during a British Psychological Society conference in England a month later to discuss further my book idea. I knew that if I got their full and undivided attention I could sell the idea to them. And I did and here is its fruition.

The point of the story is not so much to tell you how this book was conceived, as to highlight a view held by some, and encapsulated by Lindsey's initial reaction, that the study of children making and understanding of pictures has only limited academic and educational

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importance. Such a view cannot derive from a scarcity of pictures in the world. In fact, we live in a world that is proliferated with, and influenced by, pictures. We have what might be called "serious" art that is found in art galleries and museums, but we do not have to make a special visit to see pictures. They appear on just about everything we buy, advertising and informing us of the contents of our purchase. Pictures displayed in road signs enable us to travel safely from one place to another. Pictures are found in most books, magazines, newspapers and comics serving a variety of purposes that include their aesthetic communication, to illustrate the accompanying text, to express moods and ideas, and even to make us laugh. Through the creation of photography the ability to capture the visual likeness of our world is no longer restricted to some artists, but available to all who have access to a camera. Realism in pictures has been extended through the invention of "moving" pictures in film, where we can see on large cinema screens and television sets the finite incremental movements ingrained in real-life events or in animated stories.

So if the neglect of academic attention to children's picture making is not due to any paucity of pictures, could it be that *children's* picture making is not worthy of study? True, most of the influential pictorial examples I gave above are not typically made by children, but adults. However, although we live in a pictorial world it is created by relatively few adults (e.g., artists, illustrators, cartoonists, photographers, film makers). The engagement with pictures for the majority of adults is at the observational and interpretational level. In contrast, for most adults there was an earlier period in their lives in which they were very much engaged in the production of pictures. As children, we created a massive collection of pictures, particularly drawings. If we want to understand the development of the adult engagement with pictures then studying children's engagement with pictures is a necessity.

But what about studying children's drawing activity and their understanding of pictures for its own sake, as an exercise that contributes to the investigation of the psychology of childhood? It is not sufficient to argue for studying children's interaction with pictures that children do a lot of it. Children breathe a lot but few would be interested enough to research it. The study of children's making and understanding of pictures has to be informative, both in respect of

issues within the subject of children and pictures per se, but also to more general aspects of the psychology and education of the child. The objective of the book, therefore, is to present an informative review of the key issues and research findings in the broad area of children and pictures, particularly drawings as they represent a significant contribution to children's picture making. In so doing I hope to encourage an appreciation of the importance of this aspect of children's lives, and provide insight to the developmental underpinnings of our pictorial world.

With this objective in mind I have written ten chapters that provide a detailed analysis of the literature pertaining to ten topics within this field of enquiry. In chapter 1 ("The Development of Representational Drawing") I provide an historical account of the early interest in children's drawings, and then discuss children's developmental progression in their representation of subject matter from life in their drawings, and also the range of psychological factors that influence that development. An account of the development of children's drawings would be incomplete, however, without an understanding of children's expression of their feelings and ideas towards the people, things and events that they represent. In chapter 2 ("The Development of Expressive Drawing"), therefore, I examine the expressive devices that children use, and discuss the nature of its developmental pattern and what may influence it. In each of these first two chapters the focus is on the drawings made by typically developing children. In chapter 3 ("Drawing by Children in Special Populations") we turn our attention to the drawings made by children with a variety of diagnostic conditions. A theme running through the chapter is whether their drawings follow a similar developmental pattern to that found in typically developing children's pictures, or whether qualitative differences are observed which can be linked directly to the etiology and symptomatic characteristics of the children's disorder.

In chapter 4 ("Production and Comprehension of Representational Drawing") we take our first detailed look at children's understanding of pictures. In particular, I examine the relationship between children's understanding of pictures they see and the product of their own drawings. The chapter reminds us that children's engagement in pictures is not limited to their own drawings but extends to how they understand pictures in general. A key milestone in understanding pictures is to appreciate their dual nature: They are things



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in themselves as well as symbols that refer to some other reality. Children's development to gaining a fully mature conception of pictures' dual nature, and how this is influenced by the development of generic cognitive factors, is discussed in chapter 5 ("Children's Understanding of the Dual Nature of Pictures"). As children's developing cognition undoubtedly affects their pictorial understanding we might expect that by studying children's drawings we can gain some insight into children's minds. Consistent with this approach, I discuss the representational redescription theory in chapter 6 ("Drawings as Measures of Internal Representations") that claims that by studying children's representational drawings we can gain insight into the nature and development of the corresponding internal representations of the subject matter stored in children's minds.

There are a number of different practitioners who have direct contact with children and their pictorial world. In chapter 7 ("Drawings as Assessment Tools: Intelligence, Personality and Emotionality") I evaluate the use of children's drawings in clinical practice, particularly in respect of the use and validity of the diagnostic drawing tests. In chapter 8 ("Drawings as Memory Aids") I assess the efficacy of asking children to draw as an aid for their memory recall of previous experiences; a practice that has potential implications for children's recall in clinical and eye-witness testimony settings, and of course as an educational tool.

In the final two main chapters I widen our attention to consider the cultural and educational influences on children's drawings. In chapter 9 ("Cultural Influences on Children's Drawings") I reflect upon children's picture making as a worldwide activity, the study of which gives us insight to the many and varied cultural influences on children throughout the world. The pervasiveness of children's drawing activity reminds us that it should be nurtured, and that there are a variety of educational practices and programs around the world. Hence, in chapter 10 ("The Education of Drawing") I discuss first the variety of pedagogical practices that have been used to teach Western children, and then widen the perspective to consider the Chinese approach to teaching children drawing. The chapter ends by taking a more holistic approach in considering the wider educational context on children's drawing experience beyond curricula influences. Finally, in chapter 11 ("Future Directions") I tie together some of the key threads covered throughout this book, and in so doing suggest

important questions we should address in the future to further our understanding of this interesting and pervasive domain of activity in children's lives.

This book was not written quickly. It has been painstakingly researched and written over a 6-year period, at a time when a lecturer's workload is becoming increasingly demanding. But whether you are a student, academic, practitioner, artist, teacher, parent, or just someone simply interested in the subject, I hope you will find what I have written interesting and stimulating for your thinking about children's engagement with pictures. And finally, a big thank you if you have bought a copy of this book. I'm looking forward to telling Lindsey that it has sold more than three.