

SECOND EDITION

CREATIVE ART FOR THE DEVELOPING CHILD

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Clare Cherry



CREATIVE ART *for the* **DEVELOPING** **CHILD**

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CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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FOR LYNNE-TANYA AND NEELI

Photo on page 293 by Pat Roper

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Preface

Creative Art for the Developing Child was revised in order to add new activities and refine the original material, not to change it. This edition, like the first one, approaches art as a developmental process and presents activities that are appropriate for the average 4-year-old child to do without adult help. These activities are based on specific materials presented in a manner that allows children to use the materials in their own unique ways. These ways differ from individual to individual, according to age, development, motor skills, interest in the activity, past experiences, reaction to the environment, and motivation. Thus, even 2-year-olds can use the materials, but they do so in a much simpler manner than 4-year-olds. And there is, in fact, no upper age limit for the activities because older children and adults will bring their own unique experiences and interests to the projects.

If you are doing art activities that the children really like but that require much teacher assistance or that depend on patterns, models, and step-by-step “do it exactly like I do it” directions, you can use the approaches in this book to redesign the activities. Trust children to express their own creative ideas when given the encouragement and motivation to do so.

Allow children to use their own perceptions in developing their imagination and intuitive skills. Let them know that it is all right to express how they feel and to explore new ways to use materials. As they begin to understand that their individuality is appreciated, and as you begin to understand that their standards are not the same as your standards, the right and left hemispheres of the brain will become integrated and creativity will flourish.

Thanks to the staff and children of Congregation Emanu El Clare Cherry School in San Bernardino, California, for their assistance in this revision. Thanks to Barbara Harkness for her contribution on repetition (pp. 12–13). And as always, thanks to my partner and husband, Sam, for the eloquent photographs and the new cover—with an apology to my grandson, Dani, now a professional artist, for relegating his famous cover photo to an interior page.

Preface to the First Edition

This book deals directly with ways in which creative art becomes developmental art and, as such, part of the entire growth process of the child—and of the creative growth of you, the teacher, as well. The program described in this book is based on trust, honesty, and acceptance. It is self-starting, self-pacing, and goal directed toward academic and personal achievement. My approach is a personal one, based on more than 25 years of experience with children's art.

The children I refer to in this book are between 2 and 6 years of age. As children grow, they become able to make certain physical movements at sequential stages of their development. These movements relate to their sensory awareness and their capacity to perceive, which are avenues to cognition. There is, then, to a certain degree, a predictable sequence in the development of perception and cognition in children, although the precise age at which any specific development takes place varies from child to child. The activities in this book take account of this developmental sequence.

With few exceptions, every activity in this book can be pursued by 4-year-olds without adult assistance. Many of the activities suggested on these pages are somewhat complex for 2-year-olds and should be simplified when used with this age group. Many 3-year-olds, however, can do the same work as 4-year-olds, and some 5-year-olds have advanced no further in some areas than the level achieved by some 4-year-olds. Occasional reference is made to older children, meaning children who are in kindergarten or the first grade. Actually, there is no upper age limit for the use of the material presented in this book. Because the program relies primarily on the choice of materials and the way in which they are presented, children of *any* age may pursue the activities in accordance with their own abilities and at their own levels of creative growth.

The key to meeting children's needs is your ability to question, listen, and respond—to respond to their answers, movements, feelings, and moods. Being responsive requires being sensitive to their behavior—to restlessness or exuberance, to loneliness or withdrawal, to hurt, joy, impatience, and wonder. Being responsive requires being

sensitive to all the feelings and needs the children bring to school with them—and recognizing your own feelings and needs as well. The aim of this book is to encourage teachers—and parents—to be responsive—to use this key not only to meet the needs of developing children but also to help unlock their creative potential.

Throughout the book I have listed the probable growth that will occur as a result of the child's participation in each particular activity. These lists should by no means be considered as separate entities. Each activity is interrelated with many other activities. Learning that takes place in the creative art program is the cumulative result of many experiences and many repetitions of these experiences.

This book could not have become a reality without the contributions, both knowing and unknowing, of so many persons. My greatest debt is to the children I have had the joy of working with throughout the years. They have taught me whatever I know today about creative art for the developing child. Also, it is a privilege to have this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation and thanks to Congregation Emanu El for allowing me the freedom for research and for the support given to the exploratory program that has been developed in the school sponsored by the Congregation. I am grateful to the classroom teachers with whom I have worked—Aileen Applebaum, Lael Cohen, Barbie Gaines, Bettye Kovitz, Mary McDermott, Janet Peters, Alyce Smothers, Barbara Stangle, Halliette Stubbs, and Helen Wallick—all of whom tried out, added to, and encouraged my constant search for methods of presenting and evaluating developmental art. I also wish to thank Dr. Martha Frank for first alerting me to the young child as a medium for creative pursuit; Dr. Donald Churchill, Betty Fauth, Barbara Harkness, Dr. Nikolai Khokhlov, and Betty Zelman for their professional advice; Don Emkens for his darkroom work; Rabbis Norman F. Feldheim and Hillel Cohn for their wise counsel; and the many participating parents who lent their varied talents in so many ways. I also want to thank my husband, not only for his fine photographs, which illustrate this book, but for the frequent exchanges of ideas that made each difficult task seem suddenly easier.

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The Developmental Art Program



Bobby was in his first week of nursery school. Each day when he came home, his mother asked, "What did you do today?" His usual answer was, "Oh, nothing. I just played." Then one day he brought home a painting he had made.

He had enjoyed dipping the long-handled brush into the can of creamy red paint. He had enjoyed smearing it back and forth and back and forth over the sheet of paper his teacher had given him. He discovered that if he pressed very hard and rubbed the brush in one little area, he could rub a hole right through the paper. He didn't understand why the teacher gave him the paper to take home. He had already made the hole. Besides, the paint was dry. Dry paint wasn't fun.

But Bobby's mother was excited when she saw it. So was his father. And even the lady who lived next door. But, oh, especially his mother. She told the teacher glowingly how much everyone liked Bobby's picture. Sensing that she had pleased Bobby's mother, the teacher had the child paint another picture the very next day. She soon began to give him more and more art projects to do, and they became more and more complicated. Sometimes the teacher had to do much of the work herself, with only a little help from Bobby. Bobby's mother told everyone about the wonderful teacher Bobby had and about the wonderful school he attended and about the wonderful things he made there.

The teacher was very capable and understanding, but she literally got carried away with her attempt to please Bobby's

mother. Bobby's mother was also a very capable and understanding person—but Bobby was always restless and he had been slow in his early growth. His mother had worried about his ability to do well in school. She was delighted and impressed when she saw the wonderful art projects he was bringing home, even though she really knew he couldn't do them by himself.

And so, somewhere between the interweaving of adult dreams and adult anxieties, a little boy's needs were being forgotten.

And what about the little boy? Was he learning anything through doing one complicated art project after another? Well, he was learning how to please adults. He learned that blue at the top of the picture means sky. Circles have to contain eyes, noses, and mouths. When the teacher cuts out something for you to paste, you do it exactly the way she shows you to—after all, she knows what she wants you to make. He learned not to let the paint drip. And he learned that above all—oh, above all—he mustn't ever rub a real hole in the paper.

Each time the children enter the classroom, they will find many activity areas where they can go and start exploring. These areas will be different from day to day and week to week according to the weather, the season, the number of students, the development of the curriculum, the acquisition of new equipment and supplies, the mood of the children, and the teacher's mood as well. The children will find blocks. Puzzles and manipulative games. Science materials. Things to take apart, connect, stack, fit, sort, arrange, count, divide, balance. Dolls to bathe. Hats to wear. Places to be with others. Places

to be alone. Musical instruments. Suitcases to pack and carry. Special things for special days. And *each* day is a special day.

Not only will the materials and equipment be changed from time to time, but the places where the children find certain things will also be changed occasionally. This kind of variety challenges them to develop new ideas and ways of doing things. But enough things will always remain the same to ensure their security and the comfort of knowing, understanding, and belonging.

Small groups form. If children find there is no room for them at one particular activity center, they will eagerly approach another area, because the room is full of challenging things, rich with potentialities for many kinds of learnings.

Conversations spring up among the children and between the children and the adults. Sometimes, however, one child or two or an entire group may become so deeply engrossed in creative thought that there is very little talking.

Here and there among the activity centers the children will find art materials. A table with collage materials is on one side of the room. Crayons and paper are on another table. Out of the mainstream of traffic, but obvious, open, and inviting, are areas for painting and for clay manipulation.

The teacher is busy moving throughout the room. She helps one child along a walking board. Another needs his shoes tied. She shares the laughter of two children as they watch a too-high tower of interlocking cubes come tumbling down. Perhaps she discusses with them why it tumbled. She stops to put names on the papers of the children working at the collage table. She helps a child using crayons to spell her own name. And she keeps a watchful eye on the painters and the clay manipulators, assisting them if they need assistance, commenting on the way they are handling the materials, helping them to be fair in taking turns, and generally sharing their feelings as they work. Comments such as "That bright yellow looks even brighter next to the purple, doesn't it?" or "I see you made a wavy design" are appropriate. Her comments about the actual art work are factual, not evaluative. It is perfectly

acceptable, however, to express a positive evaluation of the children's *behavior*. The teacher might say, "I like the way you always put the brush back in the same can it came from," or "I like the way you are sharing the clay," or even, "I'm glad you've learned to share the clay." There are two important reasons to talk to the children as they work. First, factual comments about their work help children to form concepts and to relate what they are doing to other areas of the curriculum. Second, evaluative comments about their behavior help children to grow in self-awareness. When such comments are positive, they elevate the children's self-esteem.

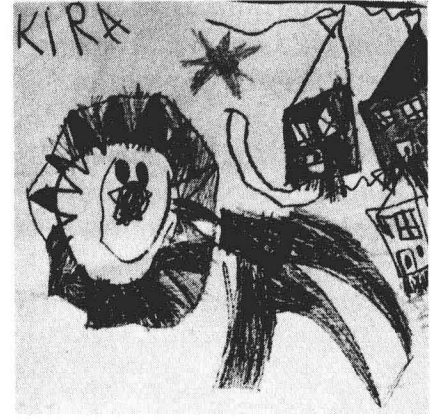
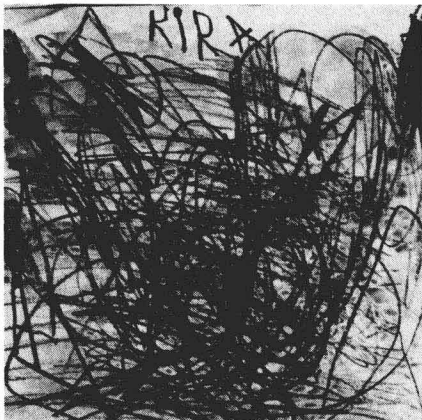
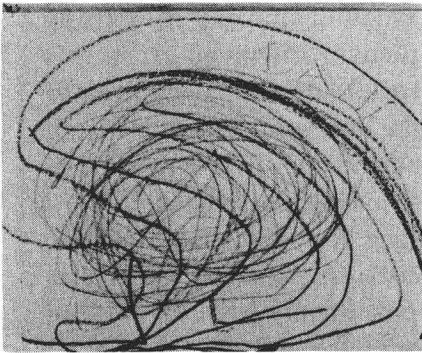
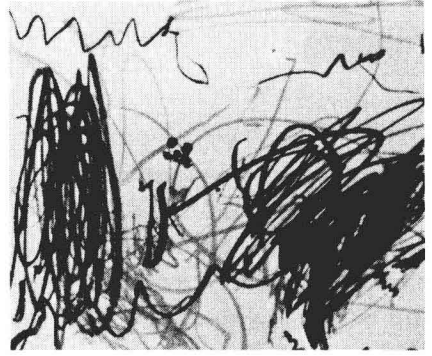
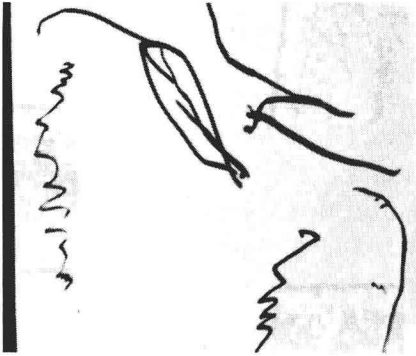
A sense of happy and meaningful play, movement, and accomplishment pervades the atmosphere. The teacher had come early enough to arrange the room and prepare the needed materials before the class session began. Therefore, she is able to fully enjoy, with the children, the free flow of activity from one area to another. The session is a beautiful and touching ballet of forms, colors, people, and rhythm.

Art education is a meaningful force in this total learning program. By sensitive planning, the children are motivated to pursue art activities and enjoy experiences that lead to general overall development. Having plenty of time to move from one step of growth to another at their own pace and in accordance with their own abilities and interests helps the children develop strong feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence. As they grow to recognize their own individuality, they become better equipped to withstand the emotional pressures of overly structured situations that they will encounter throughout life. Having many opportunities to become deeply involved in experiences related to touch, smell, vision, and hearing facilitates the children's sensorimotor development. Continuous opportunities lead to perceptual growth and subsequently to greater cognition. As you acquire an understanding of the developmental process of growth of young children, you will more fully appreciate your own role in the classroom and your ability to guide children through wholesome experiences.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL GROWTH OF THE YOUNG CHILD

Research indicates that there is a predictable *sequence* in the development of children's art. Many factors enter into these predictions, and many contradictory opinions have developed. Relating this sequence to the way children develop physically, however, makes the development of children's art easy to understand, because children can use their arms and hands to draw or paint only in accordance with the development of their neuromotor systems.

At birth, infants have no control over specific movements. Rather, they depend on reflexes. Very soon the process of learning to control movement begins, however, starting at the base of the neck and gradually moving outward (cephalocaudal development) and downward (proximodistal development). Thus, the first sign of control of movement is that of holding the head upright. Gradually the control moves to the shoulders. By 3 months of age, most infants can throw their shoulders in one direction strongly enough to turn themselves over. Meanwhile, the ability to control movement has also moved downward, so that by that age an infant is able to use the shoulders and upper chest to begin the process of lifting the upper body upward when lying on the stomach. The control of arm movements moves from the shoulders down the upper arm during the first year of life. If you stand a year-old infant in front of a wall with a paintbrush in his hand, the infant will wield the brush up and down or from side to side in a pumplike motion. Parts of the arm are not yet differentiated. By 1½ years of age, children usually have gained control as far down as their elbows. Thus, we find children of this age making lovely sweeping arcs with paint or crayon—since that is the shape that comes out when elbow movements are practiced. It isn't until age 2½ that the control of movement reaches the wrist. At that age, children universally start making circular motions in their scribbles, the result of having practiced wrist movements.



Crayon scribbles by children between 2 years 4 months of age and 5 years 1 month. Children's ability to scribble develops in direct relation to their ability to control their movements and to their awareness of the relationship between themselves and the space around them. Their marks become progressively more complex as their muscle control develops. The sequence of psychomotor development is approximately the same for each child.

CIRCLES

Gradually, as development continues, children become able to control their movements more and more. The lines they draw show curves and ovals and spirals, and the lines may begin to run in horizontal or diagonal directions. Although children's earliest scribbles are mere accidents of movement while holding pencils or crayons, they soon begin to recognize that it is *their* movements that cause the marks to appear on the paper. At this time they experience the thrill of making something that was not there before. The pleasure derived from this discovery encourages children to work to develop even greater skills. They learn that they can make daubs and scratches and marks, which they often repeat over and over in one area until they have internalized a particular movement pattern.

As they continue to practice, young scribblers next become aware of the circles they are able to make. They learn to perceive the circles as distinct shapes. From birth, the human eye responds favorably to circular or oval shapes similar to the shape of the human head and the nipples on a mother's breasts. The circle is a gentle shape, natural and elemental. From ancient times, it has been used as a symbol of the Self, the psyche. Children's egos and their awareness of themselves as individuals begin to surface just about the same time they are developing the ability to draw circular patterns. As the children's awareness of their ability to control their movements grows, they begin trying things out, inventing things to do, and experimenting with this ability.

MANDALAS AND SUNS

When children begin to be able to direct some of the smaller muscles of the hand, their drawings become more complex. Circles become mandalas or radials. Many of the drawings

resemble suns. The drawings become more complex as children increase their ability to move their fingers in more complicated motions. They like the circles they can make, so they decorate them with lines and crosses or other marks. Children's ability to control their movements and to relate to the world increases. Then, one day they draw a person.

SYMBOLS

The notion that children's first figures are merely oversized heads with legs and arms added is one of the most common misconceptions about children's art. Think of the last time you saw a child draw such figures. Did the child know that hands do not grow out of the ears? Of course. The circles were never meant to be heads in the first place. As far as children are concerned, the circle is the person, the symbol, the complete figure. They may place facial features as a means of identifying the symbol, but it is frequently an adult who first says, "Where are the hands?" Since children don't find it necessary to separate the body from the head, they will usually place the hands near the top of the symbol where the shoulders would be if the head and body had been drawn separately. If you ask about legs, the child may accommodate you by drawing a pair, even if the symbol was not meant to be a person at all. Perhaps it is a car, or a tree, or even a house. But in the developing imagination of a young child, a car, a tree, or even a house can have legs.

VISUAL-MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

As growth continues, development moves from the wrist to the fingertips when children are 5 or 5½ years of age. Only then