Introduction

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Value in Artistic Development: Raising a New Agenda

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Four decades ago, Rudolph Arnheim [1952] argued that a psychology of art had not emerged as a coherent interdisciplinary field of scholarship, in large measure, because psychologists, artists and art historians remained relatively ignorant of each other's disciplines. For their part research psychologists still have not breached intellectual gaps with other fields, continuing instead to conceptualize art as visual perceptual phenomena to be studied within an experimental tradition. This narrow vision of art is reflected within developmental psychology by assuming artistic processes progress toward a developmental end-state of pictorial representation [Eng, 1931; Lark-Horowitz et al., 1967; Read, 1956; Willats, 1977; Winner, 1982] which is presumed to faithfully preserve the projective geometry of visual perception. Even those who have challenged the perceptual theory of appearances as a valid epistemology and the assumption that development is toward pictorialism have remained fixated on the question of what geometries map graphic representations onto our natural perspective experience [Gibson, 1966, 1979; Hagen, 1986].

Both experimentalists and developmentalists of this persuasion fail to appreciate the figurative sense of artistic vision. As a consequence, the psychology of art Arnheim envisioned 40 years ago, and today for that matter [Arnheim, 1992], has yet to emerge. This is not to say no one has taken his challenge seriously. Claire Golomb's [1993] view of the child and artist alike as an 'active participant in his or her cultural community, a being that has some awareness of her own inner world of thought and feeling' [p. 1] invites an interdisciplinary approach if we are to understand culture and the ways it constructs artworlds for development [Parsons, 1988]. Further, Golomb [1993] claims that while doing art children are not isolated and self-absorbed, but engaged in a 'socially sanctioned activity... [and if psychologists are]... to fully understand the significance of this creative process... we ought to study the making of drawings within the broader context of the child's milieu, and pay equal attention to cognition, affective, and social factors in development' [p. 3].

If we accept this challenge, developmentalists have to go beyond the familiar question 'Why do children draw the way they do?' [Cox, 1992; Goodnow, 1977], to one less familiar, 'Why do children draw at all?' The former has a narrower scope, with its goal being, at least, a descriptive account over age of the changing structure of children's

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graphic creations and a specification of the skills or tricks or drawing systems by which their new artistic forms are effected. The less familiar question is the more inclusive; its goal is to identify the value of art as a socially situated semiotic function. Or, less formally, 'How does doing art affect the developing individual?' [Golomb, 1993], and, conversely, 'How might an examination of children's art clarify the nature of development?' [Youniss, 1995].

In the following essays, Costall, Davis, Wilson and Pufall glance at the more familiar question of the development of art, however, each takes a longer look at the less familiar question of why do children do art. The striking differences in how they choose to frame these questions reveal the diverse agenda of theory and research in constructing a developmental psychology of art. At the same time, they are bound together on three fundamental points: one, to describe and explain art as a symbolic activity by which children visually convey their ideas and feelings; two, to examine how this specific mode of communication is socially constituted; and three, to understand artistic activity as a manifestation of human development.

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