

Children naturally go through a sequence of stages in their art development from ages 2-6. Each child goes at their own pace— some stages will be experienced quickly, while others will last a longer time. Sometimes no evidence of a stage will be witnessed while other times a child may regress to a previous stage. Progress through these stages can be revealed in many mediums: clay, painting, magic marker, finger-painting, and more.

The Five Stages of Art (as established by Rhoda Kellogg)

#1: The Scribbling Stage

Uncontrolled Scribbles - spontaneous markings made without much control of hand/eye. Next, Controlled Scribbles will now stay within the perimeters of the paper and will often be a repeated pattern of circular, horizontal or vertical motions. Then, Named Scribbles are a controlled scribble that the child wants to label. The child has now reached a point in their development where they are ready to add a verbal dimension.

#2: The Shape and Design Stage

At first, beginning shapes are scribbles that, if outlined, suggest a shape. Soon these implied shapes become recognizable (circles, squares, odd shapes...). Now there is further evidence that the child is placing lines and shapes on their paper with deliberate intent. Number and placement of shapes become more elaborate and designs emerge.

#3: Mandala, Sun & Radial Stage

These three shapes are their own category as they provide a transition from abstract work to more pictorial work— namely the human form.

The Mandala is typically a circle or square divided by 1 or more lines crossing within it.



The Sun Symbol can be formed from a specific shape with short lines extending from the perimeter. The lines can reflect a delightful variety as the child explores this stage.



A Radial has lines that radiate from a single point or small area; sometimes radials are part of a mandala formation.



#4: Humans

The child begins to draw human forms! Sun and mandala forms are the basis for early humans, as the lines now radiate outward to form arms and legs.



#5: Early Pictorialism

It now becomes possible to recognize a human, animal (often a human like form, turned on its side), buildings, vegetation or transportation. Initially these forms are placed randomly on paper, but will eventually become oriented. A baseline for the ground and skyline appear in this stage. Color is not initially dictated by realism (purple elephants...), but will eventually, and naturally, move to a more realistic approach (green grass...). Now the child is showing a new maturity and awareness of the world.

Adults' "oh-so-important" Roles in Art Development:

In order to ensure each child's success adults should...

- Provide a stimulating, sensory-rich environment.

- Have readily available, age appropriate art materials (crayons, paint, plain paper, markers, pencils, clay, play-doh, etc.).

- Remember the value for the child is in the process of exploration and self-expression not a focus on a specific result.

- Allow for adequate time for self-expression.

- Be intentional: both with the environment and with verbal interactions!

- Provide a supportive, natural & comfortable setting.

"Creativity is more important than knowledge." ~ Albert Einstein

Remember...do not provide pre-drawn art forms or dittos!!!