

Draw Me a Picture

Theresa Foks-Appelman

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Throughout the history of mankind, drawing has served as a means of communication. It is a universal framework with which we tell stories, create maps, and navigate the subconscious mind through the language of images. Theresa Foks-Appelman's comprehensive new book, *Draw Me a Picture*, offers an accessible diagnostic aid for looking at and assessing the significance of children's drawings.

Using practical examples and extensive academic research, this book is a useful tool for therapists and teachers. Foks-Appelman, a creative arts therapist from the Netherlands, is careful to offer readers the necessary cautions that drawings should not act as a test and that the book is not an all-knowing therapy manual. Understanding the myriad ways in which children develop and orient themselves in their internal and external worlds, Foks-Appelman leaves room for the possibility that standard analysis may not apply. However, the book's lively overview includes examples of insights developed from analytical psychology, art history, creative therapy, and symbolic significance studies.

Draw Me a Picture is a practical guide and a fascinating read; it maps out age/stage significance with case illustrations that also provide the reader with pertinent developmental coordinates to drawing and emotional expression. Why and when does a child draw spirals, dots, crosses, snakes, belly buttons, x-ray drawings, or houses? Whether archetypal or individualized, the human psyche expressed in the many ways in which children draw and play, seems to bear witness to our pre-verbal abstract and later narrative intellect and experiences. These considerations are still relevant and the material cited, old and new, certainly applies to children in most cultures. Foks-Appelman writes, "This ability to spontaneously express an inner feeling is common to all children up to a certain age." *Draw Me a Picture*'s overall perspective is broad and not weighed down by too much theoretical explanation, yet each chapter is concise and well-informed.

As the author points out, the symbolic emotional significance of children's drawings varies somewhat according to each child's age and character, cognitive development, life experience, and cultural circumstances. "Children draw what they know and not what they see," the author writes. Foks-Appelman explains that her investigative insight can be "developed by everyone," including parents, teachers, and therapists. *Draw Me a Picture* reminds readers that there's a universal spontaneous language of expression we can understand, a wise story told image by image, on the page: It is our story.

ELENA KARINA BYRNE (July 1, 2010)

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