

Art in Early Childhood

Aesthetic representations among Himba people in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The research in the present study focuses on preliterate people's ways of modelling and drawing. Our aim is to understand how the participants solve the problem of making three-dimensional sculptures and two-dimensional drawings of themselves or animals in their surroundings. Also, we compare the meanings of the participants' first-ever drawings, based on one of two ways of starting the activity. The first group was asked to draw a human figure or an animal without first creating a sculpture. The second group was asked to create sculptures before drawing the same motives. We found that both children and adults drew tadpoles. However, single view representations were more common in the group who had only made drawings, while in the sculpture/drawing-group half of the drawings showed more than one view in their representations of human figures. There were examples of culture-specific features with significant recognizable social meanings in both sculptures and drawings. The findings are discussed in terms of socio-cultural theories on the development of imagination and creative combinations in settings where new tools and tasks are at hand.

Introduction

It seems to be an innate human desire to be creative in the sense that we wish to construct things and decorate them in various ways. We seem to take delight in making ourselves beautiful and decorating our everyday utensils, tools and homes with colour and design. When you have very few things and have to carry them with you the body itself seems to be a way of expressing this desire for beauty. This was visible among the participants in the present study who belong to the Himba culture in the north west of Namibia. Here they live as nomads or semi-nomads, and we met them at two places along the Kunene River, which forms a border between Namibia and Angola. Most of the Himba people strive to maintain their traditional "body culture" where they decorate themselves with ochre coloured butterfat, age-related hairstyles, and by

wearing specific cultural artefacts that indicate age, civil and social status.

The research interests in the present study concern the creation of aesthetic representations in two particular settings where people live in a traditional fashion. Like Maureen Cox and Rūvide Bayraktar (1989, cited in Cox, 1993), Elsbeth Court (1989), Andersson (1995a, b, c) and Karin Aronsson (1997) we are interested in studying art work in different cultural settings. In this study we were particularly inspired by the work of Claire Golomb (e.g. 1992, 2002) as she has raised questions about differences in how we deal with problems that occur in drawing and sculpturing. In our study we analyse how the participants solve such problems when making human figures. None of the participants had been to school and with a few exceptions, the drawings were their first ever. We study cultural traits and compare the creative activity per se when the participants form plasticine figures and draw in order to see whether the two ways of representation influence the aesthetic activity, and whether any cultural-specific traits are visible in their artwork.

Artwork and socio-cultural theory

According to Lev Vygotsky (1925/1995) artwork can be seen as reproductive or creative and combinational. While reproduction suggests sheer repetition the creative production involves a combination of different elements to show something new – an activity which both changes the present and is future oriented. The creative activity is the foundation of both aesthetic, technical, and scientific work. Vygotsky does not see any contradiction between reality and fiction, but asks himself what makes creativity happen. He suggests that it is a slow process starting from simple genuine shapes, which in turn originate from an anonymous and collective creativity. Expressions develop in complexity as a result of cultural activities and influences. Hence, creativity is born through elements in reality, which is re-combined for a certain situation, thus influencing imagination and becoming crystallized into pictures, artifacts or thoughts, which will once again influence reality. Creativity is present in everyone, but for children to be able to extend their creativity they need both their own experiences and access to others' experiences through stories, pictures, actions and emotions.

Aesthetic work depends on artistic expressions present and appreciated in an environment, material at hand and possibilities to spend time on such activities. In other words, creativity is dialogic and both socially and culturally situated.

Artwork in a cross-cultural perspective

Earlier studies of drawings in traditional cultures have focused on universal patterns, local conventions and specific expressions in child and adult drawings (e.g. Paget, 1932; Fortes, 1940; Deregowski, 1978; Wilson & Wilson, 1982, 1984; Court, 1989; Golomb, 1992, 2002; Cox, 1993, 2005; Lindström, 1994; Andersson, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Aronsson & Andersson, 1996; Aronsson & Junge, 2000). However, these studies do not focus sculpturing in combination with drawing in traditional cultures.

In a number of studies, Claire Golomb (e.g. 1974, 2002) has investigated children's sculpturing and drawing. She bases her reasoning on Rudolf Arnheim's theories (1954/1974) about universal traits in the development of children and adults' creativity. Through her lengthy research she has developed Arnheim's theory to include children's creative work, which she does not see as stage-related, but rather related to certain phases in children's development. These phases may last longer or shorter periods and even develop within one and the same drawing occasion. Golomb uses Arnheim's concept of visual intelligence to describe how different media influence the shaping of a representation.

Maureen Cox (2005) is particularly interested in differentiating characteristics in how human figure drawings are represented in different cultures. Like Arnheim (1954/1974) and Golomb (2002), Cox is not interested in looking for deficits in children's drawings. Instead, she asks herself if there are any universal traits in their drawings like starting with scribbling to proceed with tadpole drawings. Often, the first tadpoles consist of a round shape and two legs. Then the children add arms, which they attach to the head, and continue with details like eyes and hair. Some children develop the tadpole by attaching the arms next to the legs, which makes it possible to envisage a body between the legs. The next step in their experimentation is to detach the body with a line. Thereafter, they continue developing their drawing by representing arms and legs with parallel lines, and the shape of the body can vary. These early expressions seem to be robust findings, at least in Western environments.

Golomb (2002) claims that there is great variation in children's drawings during the early period due to their different intentions. For example, children who draw simple figures without arms add arms when they draw children playing with a ball. With reference to other Western studies, Golomb also suggests that during this period and throughout the major part of childhood, children prefer drawing their human figures in front view to be able to show characteristic traits. However, for the same reason, when children draw animals they may use mixed views and show the body in side view and the head in front view.

In contrast, in his large collection of drawings from non-Western cultures all over the world, Paget (1932) found that in some cultures human figures were depicted with pinheads without any details. He also found that in some places it was more common to depict human figures in profile - what we refer to as side view.

In their collection of first-time drawings from both children and preliterate adults living in a rural area with few pictures in their environment, Cox and Bayraktar (1989, cited in Cox, 1993) also found tadpoles. In comparison between rural and urban settings they found clear differences. Among the urban adults (17-23 year olds) there were no tadpoles, while in drawings by the same age group in the rural area, half of the human figures were tadpoles. Similarly, children (three to five year olds) in urban areas produced less than half as many tadpoles as their rural counterparts. Evidently, visual culture differences seem to influence the way human figures are depicted.

This concurs with findings by Wilson and Wilson (1984; 1985) who point out that children learn to draw by studying graphic pictures in their environment and that they are inspired to artwork by various sources. Wilson and Wilson suggest that children's aesthetic repertoire will be limited in societies where access to pictures is limited. This

in turn will lead to a limitation of possibilities in exploring different ways of artistic expression. These conclusions are in line with Vygotsky's theories (1925/1995) on the development of imagination and creativity and have also been confirmed in later research on children's artwork. With this reasoning as a point of departure, we find it interesting to study sculpturing and drawing among Himba people who have access to neither drawing material nor pictures in their environment.

Aim

Our aim in this study is to use data collected in a preliterate¹ settings with the purpose to gain knowledge about a well-known problem encountered in the western world within early artwork. More specifically, our concern is how children and adults solve the problem of representing a three dimensional reality through a two-dimensional medium, in this case with pencil and paper. Another problem is to investigate whether different tools (i.e. plasticine and drawing materials) influence how the participants draw and whether cultural characteristics are visible in their artwork. The questions we pose are:

- How do preliterate¹ people experiment in their drawings when they produce their first pictures?
- Are cultural specific traits visible in their artwork?
- Is the creative activity influenced by the use of two kinds of material?

Method

The context of the study

Data collection was performed in June 1997 in two rural settings where the people lived as semi-nomads. Although the Namibian government had started to set up ambulating schools and tried to convince parents to let their children enroll, this was only in its infancy. We collected our data during this time of change.

The Himba people are skillful herders who follow their cattle between locations where there is water during the rainy season and locations where there is constant access to water. This means that they have to move several times a year. Women in the community are highly valued as wives and bearers of life. Through marriage, a woman inherits a certain cultural artefact from her mother, and a man inherits access to water from his father and cattle from his mother. He may establish his own homestead and becomes a full member of his father's clan, which means that his social status is radically changed. Wealth is counted in children and cattle, otherwise people have few belongings. What they own must be easily carried when moving and consists mainly of adornments, skin, pieces of cloth, baskets, and calabashes (Van Wolputte, 2003).

Participants and procedures

Participation in the present study depended totally on who was present at the moment and accepted our invitation to join the activity. In fact, we only asked the first people at each place to draw. The others volunteered. None of the participants had been to school according to communication, which took place via local interpreters. Gender representation was equal. Our first contact with the participants was at a small marketplace in Ruacana. Here nine people between two and fifty two years of age contributed with drawings. The second group, who we met at the Epupa Falls consisted of eighteen people between six and fifty years of age. Eight of them contributed with both sculptures and drawings.

The drawing process was documented through video recording and observations. Our data also consists of drawings and sculptures produced during our visits. The instruction given was to draw/sculpture oneself or an animal. Hence, the activity was not spontaneous but an answer to a request, although the whole situation was very informal. The themes were expected to be of interest, since earlier studies (Harries, 1963; Dennis, 1966; Cox, 1993) have shown that children often choose to draw people in their vicinity who are important to them. We also included animals in the drawing task as they were both frequent and important in the context.

The materials used in Ruacana were pencils with a small rubber on top and off-white A4 paper. In Epupa, the participants also had access to plasticine in different colours and some thin felt pens. Our aim was to arrange the participants in pairs opposite each other at a small camping table. However, in Epupa, the interest was so great that some participants used plasticine and others paper and pencil only. For the analysis in this study those participants were excluded.

Findings

The body as a cultural mediator

All women carried the traditional Himba outfit consisting of a skin attached around the waist as a skirt. They also carried some thin leather straps and a thick necklace made of fibres, a leather pendant with metal beads hanging on the back was attached around the neck to form a necklace which continued with strings of metal beads in four horizontal beaded straps and a conus shell on the breast. They wore rings around their arms and legs. Women who had given birth had a small backpack of skin attached to their everyday outfit.

The men carried adornments around their necks, arms and feet. They wore loincloths but were usually bare on the upper body. However, a few of them wore Western shirts, and an elderly man wore a coat and had his hair covered by a piece of material, which was tied around his head as a sign of dignity. All were anointed with ochre red butterfat. Evidently, they took great care in looking after their bodies and adorning themselves.

The setting of the hair was important among both men and women and like other adornments, indicated age and social status. We noted many variations in how the participants had their hair plaited and we assumed that hairstyle had cultural meanings. This was confirmed by Van Wolputte (2003) in his anthropological studies among Himba people where his focus is on bodily praxis, identity and artefacts. Van Wolputte describes how transitions from child to adult are shown in different hairstyles. Girls' hair is shaved for the first time when their "bones have hardened". Then they grow a small tuft, which is plaited for the first time at a "setting of the plaits" ceremony when they are four to five years of age. At this age the girls grow two plaits hanging forward, sometimes supplemented with two plaits hanging backwards. Next change occurs at a "setting of the hair" and after that "turning around of the hair" ceremonies (ibid., p. 92-ff). To mark that they have reached the age of fertility, the young women get a small crown of sheepskin, a type of adornment they will wear for the rest of their lives. In this way, the plaiting of the hair and hairstyles mark age-related transitions, social positions and rituals, which are performed together to strengthen cultural identity and social ties.

The hair of little boys is shaved after circumcision at the age of two, three or four. Then a small strip of hair is kept on top of the head. This hair will eventually be plaited in the shape of a tail to show that the young man is a bachelor. When the young man gets married he will change hairstyle and cover it with a cloth.

In a way, these examples of cultural rituals also illustrate creative activities which include all members of the Himba culture during their life cycle. We see the cultural specific traits described above as a genuine value of aesthetics which is integrated in survival strategies and everyday work. Their various utensils are functional and show the same consciousness of shape and colour as is seen in their adornments and hair dress. In the following we will turn to another kind of creative work – the kind which we facilitated by giving access to new tools and materials.

Observations of creative activity

A snapshot from the investigated activities shows small children sitting drawing on a mat, some young women standing talking next to some makalani palms, and two young boys standing next to our camping table where some younger children are drawing. An elderly man comes later and sits down on a stone nearby. An elderly woman comes up next to him. They are all genuinely interested in drawing. All those participants producing recognizable figures draw pictures of themselves. In addition, four participants draw their homesteads. By illustrating what is beyond the task Gunnar Berfelt (1987) suggests that people draw what is important to them and in some way or the other arouse feelings.

All participants at Epupa seem to be familiar with working with their hands even if the plasticine in different colours was new and interesting. Without hesitation, all of them started to shape the plasticine. They talked, joked and laughed from the very beginning. Most of them made figures of themselves. The young women shaped short, round female bodies emphasizing breasts and buttocks. Some women borrowed plasticine from each other in order to be able to emphasize particularly central artefacts like adornments, hairstyle and the little lambskin crown in contrasting colours. The young men shaped tall, thin male figures. They were very specific the way they shaped the

hair into a tail on the back of the head. Three girls formed animals, two dogs and one elephant. It was evident that everybody enjoyed the activity and was confident in shaping their figures.

In contrast to the sculpturing work, the drawings were produced in a serious, careful and searching way. All drawings were produced with great concentration, without participation in the conversations around them. We interpret this as one of the effects of using of paper and pencil, a two-dimensional medium, which was new or unfamiliar in the culture. The following three examples are chosen as prototypical for our collection.

Exploring with paper and pencil

Four participants (2-8 years of age) in Ruacana produced scribbles only. The other five participants (13-52 years of age) of the same group drew pictures depicting themselves and animals without any pre-modelling. A 13-year-old girl started to hesitantly draw some diffuse figures on the left side of the paper. After inquiring what she had drawn, she continued to draw stylized depictions of cattle. On a second sheet of paper she drew a simple horizontal stick figure of herself.

The first picture (Figure 1) is drawn by a 25-year old man from Ruacana. He has, according to a local interpreter, never been drawing before, which makes the situation resemble what Golomb calls the "untrained, spontaneous beginnings of art making" (2002, p. 87).

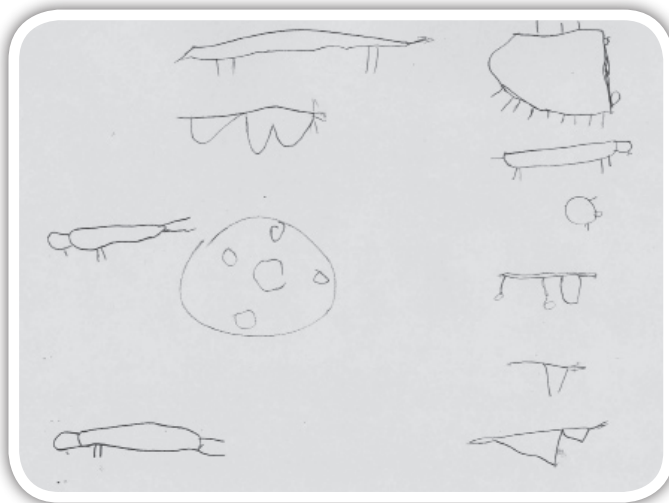


Figure 1. Man (25 years old) depicting animals in the vicinity, a homestead and self.

The man structures his picture by starting to draw animals in the vicinity vertically with equal distance to each other to the right in the drawing. He says, for example, that he has drawn a lizard, a hippopotamus and a crocodile. The drawing to the middle left shows the hippopotamus drawn in a mixed view where the artist started with a horizontal straight line to which he attaches a big head in front view and one dimensional legs with round feet in side view. Finally, he draws an extra line along the backbone line which adds volume to the animal. Our interpretation is that he wants

to create a third dimension, since he knows that a hippopotamus is wide across the back and that by adding a line, he tries to show this. This extremely simplified depiction shows the characteristic round feet and heavy head. The man uses the same drawing strategy i.e., starting with the backbone, when he depicts crocodiles and cattle.

The man continues to draw two human figures. He starts by drawing an elongated oblong body with a head, one dimensional arms and legs in a horizontal position next to a homestead depicted to the left in the picture. He starts by drawing the vertical end of the body and continues to shape it as a horizontal oblong. He continues to draw the head and faintly adds what we think is a nose. The arms are depicted vertically towards the base of the drawing and the legs horizontally. Choosing a side view in this early stage of spontaneous drawing contrasts to findings by Golomb (2002) where she noted that Western children and youngsters usually select to depict human figures in front view to be able to show relevant traits. However, it concurs with observations made by Paget (1932) in non-Western cultures. The oblong shape is repeated when he draws a lizard and another animal but he differentiates the animals by placing two pairs of legs directed towards the baseline of the drawing. In addition to these figures the man depicts a top view of a homestead with one large circle and five smaller circles inside. The circle in the middle represents the fire and the others are houses for people and animals. The homestead is situated within an enclosure to protect for intruders. To avoid misinterpretation of the representations we asked the man, via interpreter, to tell us what he had shown in his drawing.

Three of five participants drew human figures in a similar horizontal way, one person depicted stick figures, both horizontal and vertical in an inverted view, drawn in the direction opposite the baseline of the drawing.

Modelling and experimentation with pencil and paper

In contrast to Figure 1, the following two examples of drawings were preceded by a sculpturing task. Regarding the choice of views, there is a difference from the first example in the fact that both participants show their human figures from at least two viewpoints.

In our second example a six-year-old girl from Epupa starts sculpturing a little elephant in a relaxed way. She shapes the compact body and continues to chisel out trunk, ears and the tail with her fingers. She works on the whole lump of plasticine and shapes the figure through pinching, pulling and removing plasticine during constant rotation. When ready, she places her elephant in front of her and smiles proudly. After that she is invited to make a drawing. With some hesitation, she starts to make her first drawing which consists of three separate round shapes connected by a line, and a small animal similar to the figures seen to the left in Figure 2. Getting an additional paper, she draws two tadpoles where she marks the eyes (Figure 2). The figures have one-dimensional legs and were finalized by round feet. Light lines, dots and other little marks seem to be important parts of her experimentation. Later, to the right in Figure 2, the same girl draws a stick figure in profile which seems to take a stride forward. The movement is reinforced by the angled arms and the upper body leaning forward. We interpret the drawing as unusual because it combines tadpoles with stick figures in profile and depicts movement. Moreover, the girl has added a stomach, back, and buttocks to her

figure. An alternative interpretation of these two-dimensional additions might be that they represent traditional adornments. However this is unlikely, since we asked her to draw herself. Girls her age do not wear adornments the way older girls do.



Figure 2. Girl (6 year-old) exploring with paper and pencil

The girl draws her pictures randomly where she finds a space on the paper. The base line seems to direct her placement only to a minor degree. The drawing shows figures in different views and raises the question of whether sculpturing beforehand has influenced her work, since she viewed the elephant she produced from different viewpoints. We ask ourselves whether the animal in profile with a round shape to the right in the drawing may be understood as a mixed view with both a front and a side view?

In our third example, a fourteen-year-old young man forms a well-proportioned plasticine figure of himself. The figure has pure lines, and he has accentuated the characteristic hair plait so typical for his age and identity. When the young man starts drawing, we witness an intensive problem-solving phase (Figure 3). In deep concentration, he starts exploring the new medium. In the first three trials, partly rubbed out, two horizontal figures dimly appear. The one at the bottom seems to be a tadpole. As he was requested to draw a picture of himself, the figure in the middle to the right may be interpreted as yet another attempt to depict himself. The strongly stylized threadlike figure is drawn as a straight line with a foot and the typical hair plait. Finally, a standing figure in side view (middle top figure) shows an oblong trunk, arms, legs and a pinhead, again with the characteristic plait.

While observing the man's exploring another young man who is watching nearby says, shaking his head slowly "This is difficult".

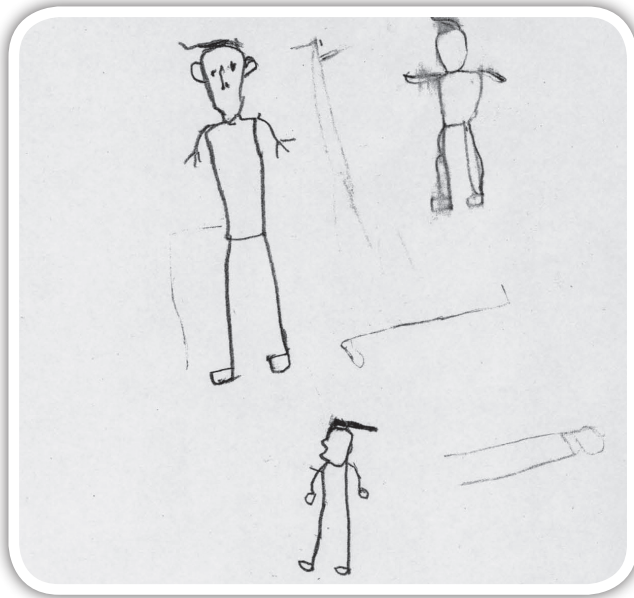


Figure 3. Young man (14 years of age) drawing self in three different views.

After these three attempts, the young man consecutively draws himself in three different views (Figure 3). The first shows a tadpole in profile, the second a figure in front view with facial details, detached trunk with one-dimensional legs and two short arms with three fingers on each. Perhaps he did try to draw one leg in an angled position but the attempt is abandoned. Another interpretation is that what we see are remaining lines from earlier depictions that are partly erased. In the third view, he seems to draw himself from the back, considering that the head has no details except for the hair plait. Head, body, legs and arms are drawn with parallel lines. The drawing may also be intended to show a front view where the artist may have forgotten or not cared to depict any facial details. However, five of the six figures show the typical hair tail. From a socio-cultural perspective, we see how the youngster emphasizes both social and cultural markers by communicating his identity through the hair tail in both sculpturing and drawing. We can also discern a development from tadpole to a person with marked trunk, arms and legs and finally a body constructed by parallel lines throughout. As we see it, the drawing is an expression of concentrated efforts to transform a three-dimensional figure into a two-dimensional medium.

With our interest in studying representations in aesthetic activities, we would like to view the whole activity as genuine problem solving in an attempt to handle a concrete and abstract material. We ask ourselves whether the varying number of views depicted in the same drawing (Fig. 2 and 3) could be a result of the modelling activity, which was performed in rotating movements when both the young man and the little girl consistently observed their work in different views? This should be seen in contrast to the first man who only drew his human figures in one view. Such reasoning is strengthened in our analysis of the other drawings by the Ruacana-group, where participants did not sculpture before drawing. In this group we only saw human figure drawings in what we interpreted as a horizontal front view. However, in the Epupa-group half of the participants who modeled first (four of eight) were depicted from at least two views - front view and profile - and as seen in Figure 3, there was also an example of the drawing of oneself in three views

Concluding discussion

In the present study, we have investigated how preliterate persons living in a rural environment with very little influence from Western culture express themselves when given the opportunity to draw and sculpture in plasticine. According to our observations, their visual everyday practices differ to a great degree from urban societies.

The everyday artwork among Himba people primarily consists of caring for their bodies through anointment. They carry adornments and have hairstyles that indicate age. This interest in manifesting identity through bodily appearance seems to be shared by all cultures, although the form of expression differs and may be less related to age. Their way of shaping in plasticine suggests that they are used to making shapes with their hands. However, we have not noticed that they use clay for their everyday utensils. This agrees with findings by Van Wolputte (2003). In his description of the raw materials used, he mentions leather, wood, fibers, shells, bones and horn, but not clay. On the other hand, the sculptures they produced in the present study resemble, to some degree, wooden dolls appearing in their culture.

Most researchers studying children's drawings have abandoned the idea of measuring intelligence and body concept in a simple way through drawings. However, many studies take Piaget's stage-related development as a clear or more diffuse point of departure. Like Golomb (1992, 2002) and Andersson (1995b), our study challenges a simple age-related theory, which has photographic depiction as its ultimate goal. Instead, we look at drawing and sculpturing as intentional representations in which the drawing or sculpture carries some aspects of the inner or outer world that the artist wants to mediate. It is a symbolic activity where the main aim might not be to exactly copy reality, but rather to communicate a message about one's own identity or culture. Artefacts showing social status and identity, which has a high cultural value, are often exaggerated in size and repeated several times within the same drawing or in different drawings. This concurs with findings by Aronsson and Andersson (1996) in their study on social scaling in children's classroom work in three cultural settings.

Moreover, we also see how access to a new material and opportunities to express themselves in a two-dimensional way create new problem solving challenges, which were quickly accepted by the participants. The generic shape of tadpoles and stick figures is confirmed in our study as we found these kinds of depictions within the whole age span – six to fifty two years. This lends support to Cox and Bayraktar (1989, cited in Cox, 1993) who found similar human figure drawings when they studied preliterate adult drawings from a remote area in Turkey, where pictures were rare and drawing activities unusual.

Vygotsky (1925/1995) suggests that children have to gain their own experiences and learn from those who are more proficient to develop creativity. In our study we see that people who do not have access to pictures, read newspapers or encounter other media representations in their daily culture, still readily start experimenting with the tools at hand when faced with the problem of drawing oneself. The uniqueness of the drawing situation became apparent when we see the change from modelling with chat and laughter to deep concentration during drawing. We could see how they tested the pencil as a tool and experimented with what it could do.

Our study suggests that, through modelling and feeling the shape, the participants are more prone to experiment with different views in their drawings. If we return to the young man who started by drawing a tadpole with a straight line connecting head and foot (Fig. 3), we can see this both as an original generic shape and as a genial simplistic design. It is not until he adds the characteristic plait that we as observers are led to interpret this extreme minimalist shape as a representation of the artist. He continues to explore how to represent himself by drawing three different views. We suggest that this exploratory work may be related to the previous modelling process where he constantly rotated the plasticine figure in his hands. This reasoning is supported by Golomb (2002), where she suggests that new dimensions of creative artwork can be discovered and understood by studying the use of different materials in creative work. As we see it, drawing in combination with modelling provides unique insight into a creative processes which expresses problem solving strategies and artistic sense, and which simultaneously communicates both universal and cultural specific traits.

The fact that the participants in the present study were not used to working with the tools provided, placed them in a new situation where their creativity was challenged. Hence, modelling and drawing created opportunities for the participants to explore different materials and tools they have never before encountered in a familiar environment. The ways of drawing evident in this study exemplify creativity, in which the free combination of lines and strokes challenges the participants' thinking, since the tools they used were not available in their culture. This also supports Natalia Gajdamaschko's (1999) suggestion: that what Vygotsky (1925/1995) called a historical perspective does not restrict itself to mean that which has happened in the past, but also that which is linked to changes occurring in the present. What we have studied is part of such a change, since our intervention meant that we supplied access to tools which were unknown to some. Providing access to a new tool creates revolutionary possibilities for exploration in new ways, something we also observed in the participants' concentration on experimenting. According to Colin Martindale (1999), Aristotle speaks of art in a positive way when he claims that it attracts attention to aspects which we have not before seen, and that one of art's pleasures is discovering similarities. Our understanding of the creative artwork among the Himba people is that it was replete with surprises, recognition and joy in the actual encounter with the creative work per se and the problem solving.

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Endnotes

1 Here we use preliterate in a narrow sense meaning that the participants have not been to school.

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