

## Art Aids with the Autism Spectrum Disorder Children (1) : Through Their Sketches in a Drawing and Painting Class

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Although there has been a lot of research on drawings and paintings with the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), there are few papers on their sketches so far. However, as a sketch can reflect the recognition, internal images and emotional state of the sketcher, it should be effective to understand and support ASD. In this paper, 120 sketches of 10 ~ 12 year old children with ASD, that took lessons in K drawing and painting class, were collected and examined in terms of six indicators, compared with 84 sketches of typical development children of the same age. The indicators were ① visual realism, ② non-visual realism: no-integration and floating, ③ baseline: the horizon and so on, ④ separation from baselines, ⑤ figure>ground and ⑥ fastidiousness with the details. The appearance frequencies of all of the indicators were significantly different between the two groups. That is, ASD children sketched with less visual realism and baseline than normal children. On the other hand, non-visual realism and floating figures were applied by those with ASD to a greater extent than normal children. Specifically, ASD children enthusiastically drew sketch objects bigger than the background on paper and obsessed the details.

Thus, ASD children do not tend to compose their sketches based on a real framework, but would instead ignore it and paint freely. It was obvious that they had hardly observed any sketched objects. A possible explanation is that it might be difficult for them to confront external objects due to "excessive auto-sensuousness" (Tustin, 1981). That is, according to her theory, one category of ASD children experience traumatic separation from their mothers in early infancy, and this causes lesser development of reliable self and differentiation of others from their own. That seems to be why they avoid recognizing not-me objects. However, as there are diversities even within ASD children, some of them developed their drawing styles from non-visual realism to visual realism and others did not. Moreover, these six indicators and the viewpoint of-visual realism are not necessarily efficient to estimate drawing development due to the cultural bias, and so other aspects such as coloring and lively impression might become important factors. In fact, some ASD children with mental retardation were able to paint and sketch vigorously without the objects having real outlines. If they gain appropriate tools and paths for self expression and are accepted in a holding environment, their sketch drawings might involve the meaning of experience "emotional catharsis and need of growth" (Thomas & Silk, 1990). That is why appropriate art aids like sketches must be required.

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