

BEGINNER'S Mind

the art of the very small
by Lesley and Solomon Maclean



Solomon Maclean at five weeks old has no particular interest in making pictures nor having them admired by others.



WILDLY FLAPPING FIVE WEEK FEET provide a tempting artmaking opportunity for an earnest mother and her handy ink roller one morning. The resulting smudgy print—Solomon's first feat of creativity—doesn't require any particular motor and cognitive skills on his part. Yet in my quest to track his journey as a creative being, what better place to start than before he knows he is one! And just as I will be providing him with materials and opportunities to use them, perhaps some of his buzzing spontaneity will rub off onto me. That's the hope anyway.

On this particular day, I seize the moment as Solomon is lying on the carpet without his nappy, dancing circles in the air. Quickly I roll up a slash of ink on the back of a cookie tin, blacken his feet, then press a *shikishi*—Japanese calligraphy board—onto this printing surface-in-motion.

Without regard to the flawless impression we have just made, Solomon slides off and grazes the edge of the *shikishi* with a wayward left hook. Damn!

I soon recognise the lesson—the perfect imperfection that completes the expression, that gives it life. Shades of the Japanese Tea Master Sen no Rikyu who, after his disciples had painstakingly cleared the garden of every last fallen autumn leaf, rattles the branches to allow a few more to decorate the blank moss.

Then as I silently regard the finished piece, Solomon chooses, as all babies do, to move his bowels and send me flying back into action.

