

BEGINNER'S Mind

the art of the very small
by Lesley and Solomon Maclean



SOLOMON AT 18 MONTHS can scribble with a ball-point pen when the inclination grabs him. His drawings range from sweeping arcs to coiled snakes, to the sparse eccentric jabs that I most treasure. He still doesn't understand the concept that marker pens or paint can be used for anything other than sucking, in spite of my earnest and plaintive modelings.

Back in the 1980's, when I was studying photography, one of my teachers suggested that when picking out the winners from a batch of images we've taken, we are drawn first to those that seem familiar in some way, whereas it is the *next* images we like that spring from our own original eye. Knowing this, I must try to curtail my fixation on my son's abstract expressionist masterpieces, and instead look with interest to where *he* is choosing to manifest creative energy.

A favorite medium these days is dirt. Having practised at great length the fine art of emptying containers of their contents, he is now entranced with the endless permutations of filling and transferring. Most days find Solomon in the yard—cupped hands ferrying the stuff from the large potted yucca into plastic pots, the stairs, my knee, *my* cupped hands, the head of our neighbor's oversized plastic magpie and beyond.

When dirt gets boring, anything's game—water, pebbles, coins, his wooden blocks, his milk, even the tea I was planning to drink. A crude way of creating, perhaps, but this must be cutting edge for him: knowing he can make *something* happen on his own terms, quite separate from the career ambitions of his mother.