

Children in War

Art and photos donated by Drs. Roberta Apfel and Bennett Simon



These images of children's drawings were donated by our members, Drs. Roberta Apfel and Bennett Simon, as part of their decade long project on children in war. Their work began during their 1989-90 sabbatical year at the Hebrew University, and culminated with an international conference, "Children in War," at the Freud Center of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1991, during the first Gulf War, Drs. Apfel and Simon returned to the Middle East and started interviewing a group of Israeli and a group of 8-year old Palestinian children, and then met with each group annually for ten years. The drawings exhibited here come from a children's art studio at Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu, a studio founded by an art teacher Malka Haas, serving three generations of kibbutz children and still functioning. She kept the studio open for children during many wars, collected their art work and saved notes on copies of children's drawings.

As teacher and founder of the "House of Painting" for children, Malka Haas has dedicated her life to the artistic creation of her young students. Originally from Berlin, Malka nee Steinitz, immigrated to Israel at age fifteen with the Aliyat Hanoar organization with her seventeen year old husband-to-be, Kloni Haas. Drawing from her love for art, which she credits her childhood with having made central to her life, Haas became a kindergarten teacher and founded the "House of Painting," as a place for expression of children's creativity. The now-famous art studio has been utilized by generations of students, acting as a safe space, a haven free from adult intrusions and from the distress of war. She is also the teacher of art teachers in Israel and author of a Hebrew book about kindergarteners' experiments with art materials (Sidrat Oranim, 1998) and the translator of Ludwig Bemelmans's Madeline book series. Among her many teaching innovations is a so-called junkyard playground. As a teacher who wanted to create "space full of stimuli and activity options for toddlers," she allowed kids to build the world of their own using local discarded materials. Her former students attested that playing in the junkyard was the most important time of the day, when kids explored their surroundings, communicated with their friends and teachers, and learned from each other.

Recipients of the 2009 Arthur R. Kravitz Award for Community Action and Humanitarian Contributions, Roberta J. Apfel and Bennett Simon are the editors of *Minefields in Their Hearts: The mental health of children in war and communal violence* (Yale University Press, 1996), a collection of essays by psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, psychologists, and social workers sharing their knowledge, experiences, and hopefulness in working with children exposed to war and violence. The book and an extensive bibliography on children-in-war originated from a group, "Workshop on Children in War and Communal Violence," they organized with Donald Cohen at the Yale Child Study Center, and James Garbarino at Cornell. Their work was also informed by asylum interviews done under the auspices of the Asylum Network of Physicians for Human Rights. Aside from their decade-long work on children in war, they have written books and articles related to their practice of psychiatry and psychoanalysis. They are deeply appreciative of the long-term support and nurturance of BPSI and the BPSI Library. Their collection of books and materials related to children-in-war is available through the Library and the Archives.

For more information:

Check out books and other archival materials from our "Children in War" collection.

Watch: [Roberta Apfel's and Bennett Simon's recent interview to Ann Katz](#) posted on bpsi.org.

Watch: [Malka Haas & Kloni Haas Interview](#) on Vimeo, 2015.

Read: "[Don't Call Them Scribbles](#)" by Tamar Rotem. Haaretz, May 22, 2008.