

Nurturing a culture of creativity at home

I sit at the kitchen table amidst the laundry and the dishes, with my pen and paper laid out in front of me. In the late afternoon when everyone was getting tired, I made a desperate attempt to stop a row by putting my three year old and one and a half year old side by side at the kitchen sink while I peeled veg for dinner. Suddenly silent they brushed soil off potatoes, carrots and beetroot, filled various containers with water, moved veg from one to the other. The concentration they displayed amazed me. Seemingly purposeless shifting of veg was done with intent, those covered with soil mixed freely with those just cleaned, the logic defying me.

The bathroom sink holds the same allure for my son, who will stand on his little chair for long periods of time. My contact lens container is filled, emptied and refilled repeatedly, with intermittent screwing on of both lids and then their removal. It seems the running tap is hypnotic like a t.v. screen. There is nothing to show for this time spent. I can't cut up bits of glitter encrusted card with splashes of paint and make them into birthday cards for grandparents.

I imagine myself at the sink, dropping peeled potatoes from a height back into the bowl of muddy water. Spending precious minutes simply draping carrot peelings over the side of a bowl, and then throwing them with abandon on the kitchen floor. I giggle aloud, liberated at the thought.

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“Ceci n'est pas une pipe”, said Magritte. This is not a washing machine, the baby would say: it's a garage (or a car wash?): all my cars are in there. I watch the baby stacking and destacking peat briquettes by the back door. He doodles a picture in the morning condensation on the car window. I breastfeed to quieten him as I make an hour-long phone call but he has a blue felt-tip in his free hand and draws my belly, and his cheeks, blue as he feeds. He forms sculptures with his Weetabix. He paints with a dropped lump of pickled beetroot on the tiled kitchen floor and he likes the colour. I watch him dance when he presses the musical buttons on his toys and I see him take a starring role in a three-act tragedy when the biscuit tin lid is taken off, a rich tea biscuit chosen for him from amongst chocolate digestives and custard creams, and the tin lid replaced.