

peekaboo

The first *stories* of myself

making a mark



appearing...

Very young babies respond to the sounds of the human voice, following its pitch and rhythms. Some psychologists have argued that these conversations have the pattern of narratives – they tell stories. Exchanges between very young babies and their mothers have been shown to contain a beginning, a middle and an end; tension and resolution; rhythm, repetition and rhyme.

If there are stories in babies' sounds, what about their gestures and physical actions? The game of *Peekaboo* is one of the first babies play. It is played all over the world, in all kinds of societies, begins early and develops throughout childhood.

Peekaboo may be the first story babies perform for an audience. It is a tiny story, quick and repetitive, which nonetheless explores huge and fundamental ideas; truth and illusion, fear and security, power and mastery, trickery, humour. *If I can't see you are you still there? If you can't see me, where am I?*

During our focus on *Storying*, we have been observing and making opportunities for the youngest children in our nursery to explore their 'first stories'. We have created stages for our babies to appear and disappear, offered materials that can hide and reveal, listened to the babies' sounds and gestures, noticed the marks they make as a sign of themselves in the world.

The images here show some of our youngest children disappearing and appearing, exploring their own image in mirrors, using their hands as tools for writing. Is this how authorship begins? Are babies already telling their own stories?

...and disappearing



...it is little Tom Thumb who plays at losing himself in the woods. To be found is like returning to the world, reacquiring one's own rights, being born again. I did not exist before this. Now I am here. I no longer exist. Here I am again.

Gianni Rodari
'The Grammar of Fantasy'

sounds & gestures

