



Thomas Eakins (American, 1844–1916). *Baby at Play*. 1876. Oil on canvas. John Hay Whitney Collection. Image courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

In the same year that he painted his 2½-year-old niece, Eakins joined the faculty of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. While there, he served on the commission that supervised Eadweard Muybridge's photographic studies of animal and human locomotion. The National Gallery of Art notes that, consistent with late 19th century ideas about education, "the baby has progressed from infantile pursuits to more advanced stages of development. By stacking up the blocks, the child practices language and motor skills." Eakins conveys the child's intent by "arranging her into a solid, pyramidal mass...aligned geometrically with the toys, blocks, and paved walk."

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