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Thomas Eakins (1844-1916), *Baby at Play* (1876). See page 1050.

KANGAROO CARE IS EFFECTIVE IN DIMINISHING
PAIN RESPONSE IN PRETERM NEONATES

A PROSPECTIVE STUDY OF PROCEDURAL
PAIN AND ANALGESIA IN NEONATES

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Thomas Eakins (1844–1916)

Baby at Play (1876)

A 2-YEAR-OLD toddler in a white frock and candy-striped stockings plays with alphabet blocks on a sunny terrace. *Baby at Play* is one of a series of paintings that artist Thomas Eakins made of family and friends after returning to Philadelphia, Pa, from 3 years of artistic study in France in the 1860s. The child is his niece, Eleanor (Ella) Crowell, shown behind the large house in which they lived with several other members of the extended Eakins family.

Although Eakins and his wife, Susan, had no children of their own, young people were an important part of his life. He was a devoted uncle and spent many weekends playing outdoor games, riding horses, or practicing marksmanship with Ella and her 9 siblings after the Crowells moved to rural Pennsylvania. Professionally, teaching art was a close second to painting as a focus of his career. He began by teaching life-painting classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and eventually became its director of instruction.

Baby at Play is more than a casual sketch. It is a surprisingly large painting: 4 ft wide by nearly 3 ft high. Ella is shown as a life-size, almost statuesque figure and seen from a viewpoint quite close to her, near her eye level. She takes no notice of us or of the toy cart and doll nearby; instead, she seems earnestly occupied with placing a first block in the creation of some new structure. Eakins the painter-teacher may be suggesting that even at 2 years of age, a child's job is learning, and it is serious business. The picture might almost be titled *Baby at Work*.

In the classroom, Eakins was a charismatic, strong-willed, demanding teacher. Having received classical art training abroad, he believed that knowledge of human anatomy was essential for drawing the human figure. He had attended anatomy classes at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia and insisted on using nude human models in his drawing classes. To reduce expenses, stu-

dents were encouraged to pose for each other, and at times he did so himself. He wrote to Ella's mother, "I hold that the study of the figure is the foundation of good art, also that it is not right for one to profit by such study who is unwilling to allow his or her body to be seen."^{1(p113)} In Victorian-era Philadelphia, this proved to be a controversial stance. In 1886 after he removed the loincloth from a male model while teaching pelvic anatomy in a coeducational classroom, the ensuing uproar culminated in his forced resignation from the academy. He continued to teach a group of loyal students under other auspices.

Sadly, the moment captured in *Baby at Play* was probably one of the happiest in Ella's troubled life. She took art classes with her Uncle Tom but eventually gave up art to study nursing. While in nursing school, she mistakenly gave a near-fatal overdose of medication to a patient and was so distraught that she attempted suicide. She never fully recovered. Soon her wild behavior was too much to manage at home, and she was admitted to a mental hospital. At age 24 years, after being discharged home to the farm, she found a gun and fatally shot herself. Compounding the tragedy, Ella's parents blamed Eakins for corrupting her by his teaching methods and contributing to her illness and death. He was banned from the farm, and the surviving Crowell children were forbidden to speak his name. That year, Eakins gave up teaching for good.

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REFERENCES

1. Foster KA, Leibold C. *Writing About Eakins: The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection*. Philadelphia, Pa: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; 1989.