

THE FEELING OF ALUMINUM

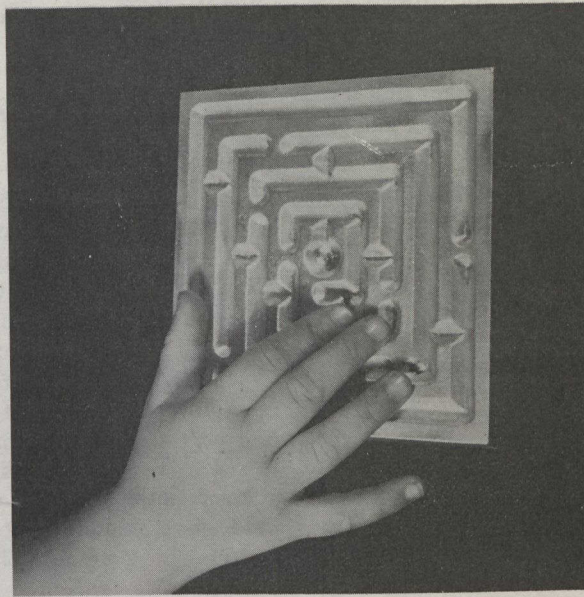
A cast aluminum maze designed by students of Sheridan College School of Design, near Toronto, is helping blind children increase their sensory awareness and expand their perception.

The maze, a five-by-five inch square of cast aluminum, half an inch thick, is one of a series of 15 objects designed by Sheridan students, and accepted and incorporated into a "Tactile Toy" package after testing by blind students at the Ontario School for the Blind in Brantford, Ontario.

Some 200 sets of these "tactile objects" will be distributed as a special issue of the magazine *The Dot* – a braille magazine for blind children aged nine to 14 – as well as to institutes and schools for the blind throughout North America and Europe.

The intense concentration of blind children on anything new, together with their ability to see by touch, is one of the major reasons the project got off the ground. It started with Mrs. Mary Francis Haws, editor of *The Dot*, Mrs. Sheila Lamb, information officer with the Office of the Design Adviser, Canada, and Stephen Hogbin, master, Furniture Studio, Sheridan College School of Design.

Originally conceived as a special issue of *The Dot*, the project, after preliminary discussions, changed direction. The three agreed to forego the usual magazine format in favour of a series of three-dimensional designs that could be packaged in a box. The aim was to develop objects that would not only



give tactile pleasure, but also stimulate awareness. The students of Sheridan College were then given the following instructions: design two items, one both visually and tactually hard, the other soft, in any material that will evoke a multiplicity of images in the recipient. The items must be capable of being reproduced to a minimum of 200 units.

OVERSEAS ENTRIES

Sheridan also invited 30 other art colleges from 20 countries to participate, and three ultimately did. They were Werkkunstschule, Han-

over, West Germany, Rhode Island School of Design, U.S.A., and West Sussex College of Art, Britain.

Typical of the energy poured into the project is the creative talent devoted to it by Judith Almond, now in her third year at Sheridan. Judith, (shown in the photograph with Marcia Vinsky, age 6, and Stephen Hogbin, master, Furniture Studio, Sheridan College School of Design) was responsible for the design and manufacture of the maze, and spent some six weeks experimenting with various aluminum alloys to determine the best one to use.

Aluminum for the metal part of the project was donated by Alcan Canada Products, a division of Aluminum Company of Canada, Ltd., through Alcan Ingot Ltd., and supplied by Metals and Alloys Company Ltd., Toronto – the Canadian distributor of Alcan ingot products. Other industries contributed paper products, rubber and wood.

