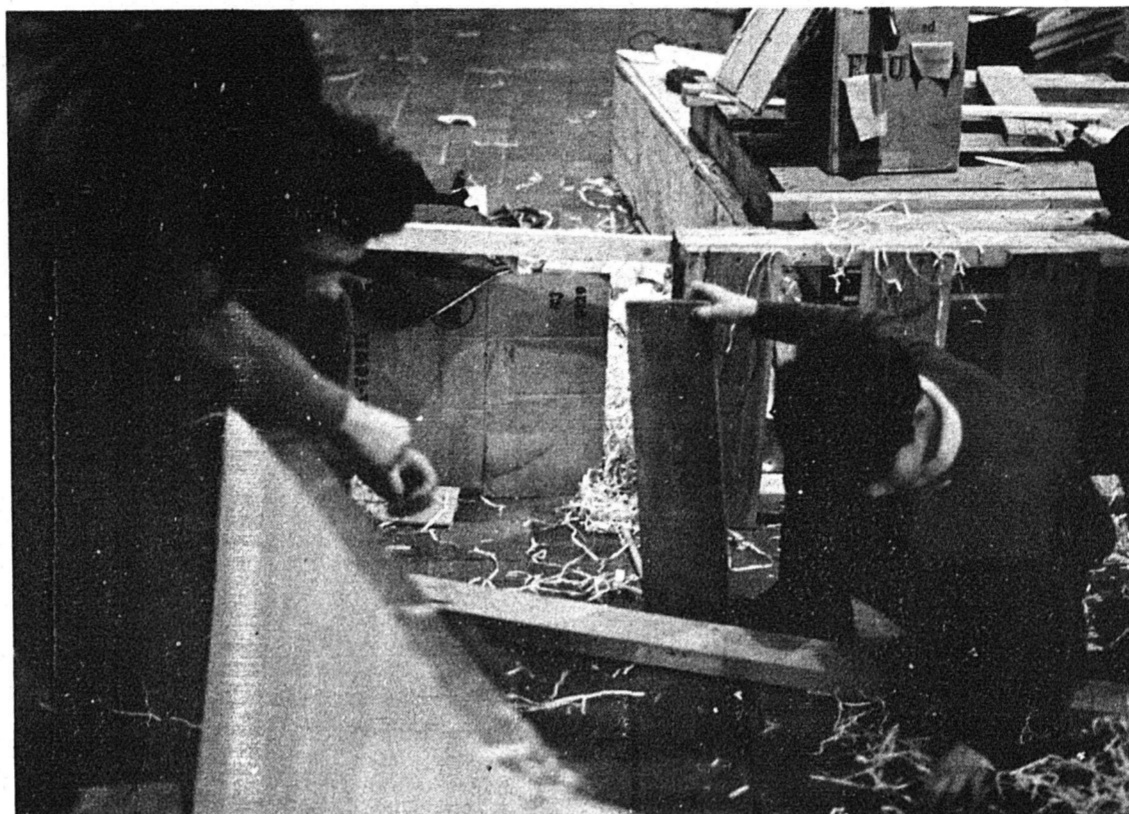
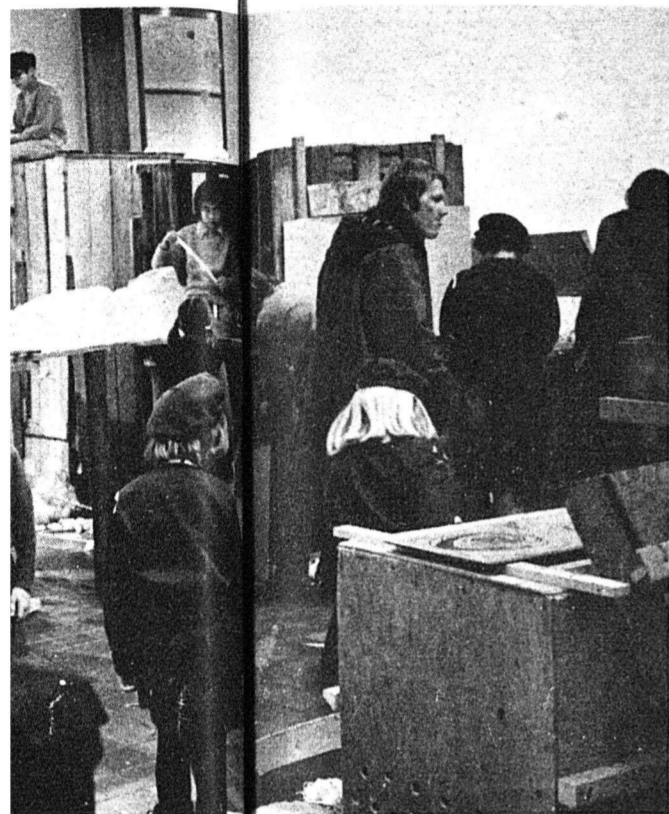


of children are let loose



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one group of hile as they went a scheduled bus were five kids up until the idea ystem had arisen e separated from ecause they were erent projects.

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to see that any out the idea was the leader decided The final decision the leader and he

seemed to have an absolute veto power. Democracy existed among the children only to a very slight extent and then only when the leader felt it will not harm his authority.

The children decided on the framework for the bus system and started to put it into action. The leader issued a driver's licence to the bus drivers and printed licence plates on bits of cardboard which the drivers nailed to the four wheeled carts that represented the buses. A schedule was set up and jail terms were threatened if any unfortunate driver was not on time.

Once the system was set up, the leader seemed to loose interest and wandered off in search of other fields of glory. The system ran smoothly for half an hour but then turned into a road race with the three buses roaring around the floor, breaking speed limits, knocking down buildings and people until the sheriff turned up and threw the whole bunch into jail for a hundred years.

I interviewed several of the kids for their opinions on the value of Trash City concepts. They were all enthused about the project, mainly because it allowed them to do anything they wanted and was entirely voluntary. If a kid wanted to sit for a while in a corner and do nothing, nobody would think it odd or force him back into the action. In a like manner the children were free to join any of the groups in the room or work on his own if he felt like it.

Perhaps it is because of this freedom and enthusiasm that the children have been able to show so much creativity and inventiveness using materials that by their very nature are uninspiring.

I asked several of the children, both girls and boys, whether they were having more fun in Trash City than they got out of their Christmas presents. The answer was resoundingly in favour of Trash City. Intrigued by this answer, I asked why this was so, they said that Trash

City was different all the time, but their toys were always the same and they often got bored with them.

One thing that is very apparent to the casual observer of the children is the absolute lack of co-operation and involvement between the girls and boys. They never work together and rarely talk to one another. When they do talk it is invariably in a heated argument. The girls do not like the boys and the boys hate the girls, although they both seem to understand that this is because of their young age.

The maturity manifested by the children on this matter and many other topics is amazing. Whether this is because of their creative ability or because of the quality of their education is hard to say, but it certainly is not related to their backgrounds. The children at Trash City represent a cross section of all classes of society and economic states. The only thing the children have in common is their

interest in art, several belong to the art classes given at the art gallery but then even that does not provide a satisfactory explanation for their mental awareness.

As an offshoot to the idea behind Trash City, the Gateway turned over one page of today's paper to the children. We gave them no help other than technical help in laying out the page, then turned our backs and let them go to it. Well, you can see the results. Impressive when you consider that the average age of these kids is around eight or nine.

They did everything themselves, decided what to print, drew their own cartoons, based on their experiences, interviewed several of their contemporaries to base their news articles.

