



Inventing Kindergarten

Norman Brosterman

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This is the first comprehensive book about the original kindergarten, a revolutionary educational program invented in the 1830s by charismatic German educator Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) that grew to become a familiar institution throughout the world by the end of the 19th century. Using extraordinary visual material, *Inventing Kindergarten* reconstructs the origins of the most successful system ever devised for teaching young children about art, design, mathematics, and natural history. Kindergarten - a coinage of Froebel's combining the German words for children and garden - involved not only singing, dancing, nature study, and storytelling, but also play with the so-called Froebel gifts. This series of 20 educational toys, which included building blocks, parquet tiles, origami papers, modeling clay, sewing kits, and other design projects, became wildly popular a century ago. In a section of the book devoted to the origin of abstract art and modern architecture, Brosterman shows how this vast educational program may have influenced the course of art history. Using examples from the work of important artists who attended kindergarten - including Georges Braque, Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier, among others - he demonstrates that the design ideas of kindergarten prefigured modern conceptions of the aesthetic power of geometric abstraction.

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