

Amy F. Ogata, *Designing the Creative Child: Playthings and Places in Midcentury America*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2013)

Amy Ogata's *Designing the Creative Child* explores the emergence of creativity as a defining feature of American childhood in the years following World War II. Against a backdrop of the "baby boom's" massive demographic shift, Cold War political anxieties, and the midcentury intensification of commercial consumption, Americans mobilized the material culture of childhood to support the idea of children as naturally imaginative and innately creative. Ogata tells this fascinating story by deftly moving through different scales of evidence—from the intimacy of educational toys and suburban domestic spaces, to the broader field of public schools and urban children's museums. She skillfully bridges the gap between architectural discourse and popular reception, persuasively arguing that the discourse of creativity was not only physically embodied in the places and things of childhood, but that these objects and spaces "participated actively in the dissemination and consumption of creativity at a quotidian level." The committee was particularly impressed with the interdisciplinarity and transmediality of Ogata's study as she unpacked the arguments about creativity made by educational toys, children's television programs, suburban playrooms, stackable classroom furniture, open-plan classrooms, and child-focused museum exhibits and programming. *Designing the Creative Child's* scholarly rigor, its compelling argument, and its engaging and accessible writing style will ensure that it reaches a broad and appreciative audience who will never again pick up a Lego or cross a playground without thinking about Americans' enduring allegiance to a romantic notion of the creative child.

Committee:

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