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Art and Community: “Dwelling Munich”

CHARLES SIMONDS

with Irving Sandler

JUL-AUG 2018

DWELLING MUNICH | MUNICH, GERMANY 2017



Charles Simonds, *Picaresque Landscape* (detail). Museum of Modern Art installation, 1976. Also exhibited at the Tompkins Square Park Public Library on the Lower East Side, 1977. Collection Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Publisher's Note: This warm and revealing rapport between an artist and a writer exemplifies the camaraderie upon which the community of the Brooklyn Rail flourishes. It is the last interview conducted by Irving Sandler, and it is our great privilege to publish it now, in honor of his life's work and tireless enthusiasm for our beloved journal.

Charles Simonds is an artist who has been making dwelling places for an imaginary civilization of Little People who are migrating through the streets of cities throughout the world. Each dwelling tells part of the story of the lives of these people, where they have gone, what they do, how they live, and what they believe. Usually passersby, often children, join in as Simonds works and he offers them clay bricks, and allows them to add to his dwelling or to make a fantasy dwelling of their own.

In 2016 Simonds was invited by the Department of Arts and Culture of the city of Munich to propose a public artwork. In cooperation with elementary and high schools, and with the architecture school of the Technical University of Munich

(TUM), Simonds, assisted by Beate Engl, organized children in several neighbourhoods to collectively make dwellings in public spaces. First created and exhibited in libraries, parks, and schools, the dwellings were then brought together in a comprehensive exhibition at the Kunstraum München where the children met one another, saw the variety of what they had created, and shared it with the public.

Irving Sandler has followed Simonds's work since the artist began creating dwellings in the streets of the Lower East Side of New York in the early 1970s. He was curious about the Munich project and interested to know how Simonds's involvement with children relates to his conception of art-making generally.

Irving Sandler (Rail): The two things I think I want to deal with are your perception of art and how we move from a discussion about the early work, and your work with kids, into thinking of the Munich project, which involves kids.

Charles Simonds: Many, many kids. Hundreds. And kids from very different backgrounds. Privileged kids, refugee kids, Erasmus scholarship kids studying architecture, it's a whole universe of kids. It's an arc in my work that begins in the Lower East Side, includes some "art-making" in museums around the world, but then arrives back again, in the street with kids. And it all becomes coherently political and sociological there in Munich.

Rail: Now that to me is very interesting, and I wish you would talk about the relation of your concept of art to your real interest and concern with kids.



Hussein Abdul Karim, *“Divided” home*, 2017. Photo: Max Geuter.

Simonds: Well my art is not directed specifically towards children. My involvement with kids really began by chance when I started working on the streets of the Lower East Side and kids discovered me. So I think you’re asking me to talk about a very particular aspect of how my work, which usually involves an active dialogue with an audience, sometimes kids, but more often adults too. The Munich project was intentionally designed to address different groups of kids in a city that is trying to integrate an immigrant population. I thought that kids’ voices might offer a perspective. So forty-five years after my work on the Lower East Side, if we talk about the Munich Project, I see that kids’ reactions reveal my very different definition of what art is and of what its purposes can be. Children exemplify a way to connect with an audience that has almost no interest or education in the art you

might find in a museum today, the art history that you and I may share over the past forty years, or even art as it has existed in western culture since the Renaissance, for that matter. Kids and adults in the street are in a very different world than the world of objects, relics in galleries, museums, and art history. Certainly that's not the story that they're reading in my work. High art and its history is a non-issue for them; it doesn't play any role. What does play a role are some of the things that are at the base of my art and the beliefs it represents. I'm more concerned with their lives and thoughts about being and dwelling; how you think about your past, where you came from, how you imagine your future, and what it might mean to you. I am more involved with the Earth and our environment. My work deals with those issues rather than art about art. Certainly art has had different purposes at other times and in other cultures, and kids' reactions throw into relief those differences.

In Munich, refugee kids, for example, were invited to make a dwelling about their past, where they see themselves now, or how they imagine their future. They could work alone, making their own houses, or with another child, or more, making a village or town collectively. Since it was Ramadan, some of the kids made mosques. One, who had been in the Iraq war, built a house that had a wall running down the middle. The past was on one side, all destroyed, and a new home was on the other side. The past was sealed off. But there were little, little holes in the wall, because, he said, "you can never forget the past, in the back of your mind you will always remember that you were in a war." Another child made a *Panikraum* ("panic room") for "shy people," a home with no windows and a closed door where her "little people" could go "when the world becomes too much for them and they don't want to see out or have anyone see in."

All these metaphors having to do with how you live and how you imagine yourself living are about being and dwelling. They're not about "art." Not about Western art, not about art from Anatolia, not "art about art." The children's stories precede any formal concerns. Thinking back to your original question, asking me to give you my definition of art, I think that this way of communicating is basic for me; it supersedes any ideas of Modernism and all that New York art stuff. Since I would like to offer other ways for artists to work, with different non-art world audiences, art about art doesn't concern me much at this point.

So I think I was lucky to discover kids. They've helped me to see that part of my work that belongs to the child; the simple fantasy that allows one to wonder at the world and have a way to project onto it one's own beliefs. It has allowed me to enter the world in an innocent way. A way I think is nearer to the original motivation to make art.

Rail: In fact, you invented a whole society of little people.

Simonds: As many children do. And since I have worked all over the world, in the streets of many different countries, kids' reactions have shown me that the things that I'm doing touch on some psychological and social issues across cultures and environments. I think I provide a platform, an invitation for people to express themselves, create a voice, a validation and empowerment. Sometimes that becomes a lever, socially, sometimes it's just an individual's escape.

Children are relatively free of acquired cultural baggage. Through their reactions to my work and through what they create, they give a candid expression of themselves, their wishes and their understandings. I find that revealing and magnetic.

Rail: I have always thought that there were two ways to look at art: you could either look at art as art, or life as art. And I think you're on the extreme of life as art. Certainly the idea of making art on a street, making it with an audience of kids and then walking away from it is something that most people would find difficult in defining as art, and you yourself have done gestures which indicated that you want to turn it in another direction. When the Whitney Museum purchased a work of yours, you didn't want that work shown in the galleries, but you had it shown in the stairwell and another part of the piece was on a windowsill of a building across the street, so you could get outside of the museum.



Installation with artists, Kunstraum, Munich, 2017. Photo: Max Geuter.

Simonds: Completely independent of the museum, yeah. I'd rather enter the world, not just the art world. I don't think the conventions of our contemporary art culture are a very useful vehicle for me, nor have they ever been. More often I seek out audiences that reflect back to me my vision. I've worked with patients in a mental hospital in Paris, with children in a mental hospital in Munich, in a rural school in southern India, and in many ethnically varied neighborhoods at particular historical moments throughout the world. Germany in the Baader-Meinhof era, in East and West Berlin at the time that city was divided, or China in 1980. Sometimes I exhibit work in museums, doing retrospective exhibitions that historicize my work and help me see my own evolution, and sometimes I've used historical collections as a foil, such as at Dumbarton Oaks, to reveal connections between my work and art of other cultures. But often I feel I'm in the role of being an itinerant bard or shaman; like a trickster making religious art. In the streets of the old port area of Genoa at Christmas time in the seventies, a prostitute turned one of my dwellings into a crèche complete with plates with candles! I think my behavior, as an artist, and people's reactions to it, exemplifies what I believe art is.

So I think you hit on part of what defines art for me. I don't think of art as being about art. I don't believe that art requires an initiation. Nor do I believe that art should rely on the crutch of words to have meaning. I always joke that you don't need a college degree to understand what I'm doing. I don't think art needs to be institutionalized. I think it can be a special part of everyday life. I also believe it can be shared as a communal gift. That's one of the reasons I work in the street, where

my work belongs to everyone and is destroyed if one person wants to possess it. It's precious, it has meaning, but it's simply a gift, relieved of any monetary preciousness. I put my art there for a very different purpose, for very different audiences than most of the contemporary art I've seen around me.

Rail: There are two things that your comment just raised: I guess one has to do with something that is in the realm of art, namely, the narrative, the Little People's narrative, which is purely imaginative.

Simonds: If you cast my work in terms of narrative, I'm easily within the realm of art, and also within the realm of the art we were just talking about with Lucy [Sandler]: pre-Renaissance and medieval art, art which tells a story. And I certainly think of myself as an artist with respect to craft. I was trained as a traditional modeller making sculptural reliefs, mythological stories, lots of angel wings, and putti! But I think the part of it that we were talking about when you mentioned the Whitney is about the ways art is experienced and consumed, how it enters the world, the box and the baggage. For me, the museum as a frame of art, is a very narrow confine, I'm interested in reaching people who aren't about art, but can think about other things that historically have been the roots of art: beliefs, religion, objects that have a shamanistic power, objects that are interactive, and archetypical narratives. My art is founded by beliefs; it is the expression of a religion I have invented.

Rail: But your attitude strikes me as social, it might be considered political.



Charles Simonds, *Dwelling*, Willy–Brandt School, Freudstrasse, Munich 2017.
Photo: Max Geuter.

Simonds: Depending on the context, but certainly a social attitude. I don't think what I make as art is so different. I'm interested in finding arenas where the human issues, the existential issues, the social issues, and necessarily the inevitable political issues are the concern, that's where we arrive back to children, my first audience on the Lower East Side. While I worked I would give kids clay bricks and extend the landscape in my work to let them make their own dwellings. I was making my fantasy but at the same time they were making theirs. It was an invitation; and they

would bring their little toy plastic penguins and put them in my dwelling, steering my fantasy into their own.

Rail: Did you let them actually work on some of your...

Simonds: They could change mine or they could make their own next to me and we could talk about our fantasies.

Rail: So almost from the beginning you were looking away from what art was supposed to be?

Simonds: It was so evident to me. Why would you want just to make art in a gallery or museum where people are seeing it in a very particular context, as opposed to being open to the world and just having people respond to what you do where they lived? I quickly understood that the art thing was very esoteric from my point of view and soon, after only a year, I became part of the Lower East Side community. I was invited to be on the board of the Lower East Side Coalition for Human Housing, I helped create a play lot, and I got very involved in community housing issues, and in working communally.

Rail: I want to talk about the playground that you did, but let's stay with this. In your interaction with the kids, what are some of the things that you learned?

Simonds: Well, I learned mostly from very particular kids whose fantasies were equally as evolved and elaborate as my own. I always mention Josefa.



Simonds constructing *Dwelling*, Passage Julien Lacroix, Belleville, Paris, 1976.
Photo: Andre Morain.

In 1976 I worked in Belleville, in Paris, for a couple of months. Ten and a half year old Josefa came the first day and said, “What are you doing?” And I said, “Making a house for Little People.” Then she told me, “Well, I know all about the little people. I have my own little people, and in my world of the little people, if you eat something and you don’t share it, it turns to poison in your mouth.” I often tell this story because it shows how evolved her morality was at that moment of pre-adolescence,

trying to deal with a world that's not as rosy as her child's fantasy and what happens when she starts to meet other kids who were less in a fantasy world. And since Josefa hung out with me for many days, certainly I learned a lot from her.

There's a little moment there when a child's fantasy is questioned and has to take into account the world around it. To me, that's a very poignant moment. Perhaps it's my own moment. If you think of a child's fantasy as belief, as wish, as desire or hope, then there's a moment when the world says, "Well, no, it can't always be just like that." It sounds very clichéd, but in a way it's very real. Children have a very magical way to see the world. It's projected in a very beautiful way because you see who the person is, candidly, at a moment. Certainly that's what's going on in Munich right now. Kids are projecting a very poignant and raw version of the world, perhaps not the world they would have hoped, but an animated one that includes loss. One girl, when asked about the background to the dwelling she made said, just as if it was common fact, "Well, the background is, I was in—my family was in—a war in Syria, and our house was destroyed and my mother had to leave and we couldn't go back to the house, so we came to Germany." Period. There's a kind of honesty, a kind of brutal honesty in trying to assess the world and master it in some way. Children who look upon my work are given the freedom to unselfconsciously create their own version of a world.



Charles Simonds, *Dwelling*, Passage Julien Lacroix, Belleville, Paris, 1976. Photo: Andre Morain.

Rail: Both of your parents were psychoanalysts; did that prompt you in this direction? Talk about your interest in children as it relates to your art. Where do you think it comes from?

Simonds: Well, my mother was a psychoanalyst who worked primarily with children, focusing on early child development. So when I was very young I had a particularly keen interest in those “other children” she spent so much of her time with. I was jealous of the doll house in her office that I wasn’t allowed to play with lest I disturb one of the children’s “set ups.” So I’ve always been awake to the issue of child development. And as an adult, I became familiar with her writings and

theories. And now I have raised two children of my own.

I've tried to think back, "What are the things about that which made me peculiar?" You know, the dinner table in my home when I was young, listening to the discussion about this patient or that patient, who did this or who did that. My father was so dogmatic in his Freudianism and my mother was so radical in her Feminism. Underneath both of their points of view, the way they analysed behaviour, is a belief that there are certain commonalities among people, that there are underlying motivations and passions. Likewise, some abstract assumptions about what certain forms mean, "balls and bats," as it were, along with many Jungian kinds of thoughts about archetypes that establish simultaneities, I think that all this established in my mind a sense of timelessness: that certain things are eternal, recurrent and eternal. That certain behavioural patterns or beliefs—it's more something that seeps into my way of thinking about things—that there are certain commonalities. My mother, for instance, was in the circle of Margaret Mead and Dr. Spock and all these people who were finding patterns in people's behavior. Certainly that infected every way in which I thought and how I see somebody. I see them as an emblem, they're individual, but they're also one of many of a kind; that's inflected a lot of what I do. It just sort of assumes you can transmit something that has a meaning, not an art meaning, but a commonality about being and people. Certainly that's somewhere underneath a lot of this—and my relation to kids—not to mention the formal issues, how I deal with the body, my mythologies of my Little People, some of that springs directly from my mother's research into how a child discovers his body.

Rail: To me this is a very interesting point; I deal with it now in my own life, the relationship of autobiography to my criticism, and you appear to be talking about the role of your autobiography, I mean from the earliest days in your art.

Simonds: What shapes how you think? I was thinking that some of what we're talking about, the difference between you and me, is between your definition of an artist as a kind of heroic protagonist of himself, all that Abstract Expressionist existential self-inquisitive pathos, as opposed to me thinking of my role as a protagonist towards my self but also towards the world outside, beyond our art context.

Rail: Even a heroic figure.

Simonds: Not exactly. I wanted to talk about that. The protagonist version of an artist is one that I've accepted but I think I've changed. For instance I always refuse to have a picture taken of me; I work in an anonymous way. In the street I have no

name. I have no identity in the sense of being an artist, but I am a provocateur. It's as if I'm an anonymous protagonist. I'm more like an analyst who provokes a person to expressive fantasy, to free associate. I can do it without waving the flag and saying, "Well, I, Charles Simonds have gone deep into my soul and found some existential angst that's going to be emblematic and represent all of us, all the tragedy of our being." I mean, I think I've done that without having to be the subject. I've created a communal empathetic ground and it does reveal tremendous pathos.

Rail: But there's something else that seems to happen in your art at this moment, because you're back again with the kids and your whole conception of the kids, but now in two entirely different contexts: one Munich, the other India.

Simonds: And I'm also coming to it with a much different perspective, because Munich has so many layers to it, and those are layers I've created by demanding particular ways to go about it. It's very different from the way I approached the Lower East Side of New York. Now I know communities; so for instance, to do the Munich project, I took the Metro to twenty different neighborhoods.

Rail: Talk about the Munich project, how it happened, and what was expected of you.

Simonds: A curator, Stephanie Weber, who worked at MoMA, asked me to do a lecture there in 2015. She was very interested in my work and when she got hired as a curator at the Lenbachhaus in Munich, she asked if I'd do an exhibition there. I told her that at this time in my life, I'm not so into making an art show, but maybe if she could figure out some way to do something outside the museum, in Munich, I'd be interested. The director of the museum, Matthias Mühling, proposed me to the city government for their biennial Art in Public Place program and I was their first choice, and invited to Munich to do research to make a proposal. By chance I happened to arrive at the Hauptbahnhof (Central Train Station) at the same moment as the first refugees, a very important moment in Munich that resonates powerfully to this day.

I went to the City offices to meet somebody who would help me. I said I wanted to see a regular middle-class neighborhood, a working-class neighborhood, and an ethnic neighborhood, if there was one. What I wanted to do was to have kids from each neighborhood work collectively to make fantasy dwellings that represented their versions of their past, where they came from, who they were now, and where they were going, or where they think they would like to be in the future. I chose what was historically a refugee neighborhood, Hasenberg, called the "broken windows"

district by Münchenern, Schwabing, a neighborhood like the Upper East Side of New York with kids going between ballet class and football practice; and Giesing, a working-class neighborhood. My proposal was to work with kids in the different communities and have them each make something that would be shown in their community. Those works then would be brought together with work from the other communities, in one place, so the kids could see what all had been done, what these kids are thinking about versus what other kids are thinking about in other neighborhoods.

Rail: How did you tell the kids about building?

Simonds: It's very, very simple and I've done it many, many times. It's something I do very easily. I have some clay, physically, a ball of clay in my hand and I explain: "This is how I did what I have done; I had a ball of clay, I pounded it down flat, and I sprinkled it with sand and I saw that it was a place, not just a material." I show them pictures of my process. Then I show images of how I start to build, to inhabit that place, using bricks, creating walls and making a home. Then I introduce time by creating ruins with fallen bricks and then the idea of a people and their history, how I inhabited that place and started to imagine my Little People.

I made a presentation for each group. Usually it was through a school. We would organize a class, and I would go to the classroom and show some pictures of my process and how to make bricks. Then I explained how I thought about the Little People. I explained my book "Three Peoples," a fictive ethnography I wrote about people who live in a line, a circle, or a spiral, each with a different relationship to their past. They quickly get it; it's not very complicated. A week or so later they met to make a communal dwelling. We provided a wooden platform, and gave each kid some clay, and we had assistants to help them make bricks. Then they just make their fantasies.

To go back to your question of "What is art?" to me that's a fairly direct version of making art, something that takes stock of your being, who you are and where you are, and expresses it in a visual way—the images are quite strong, the directness of it is something I've long ago lost, and am wistful about, of being so perfectly naïve in the building, but wanting something to express what you feel. Certainly if you ask me what is the common denominator of these issues about what is art, that's the illustration of it to me. And my intention was to create a platform where these kids could express their own version. It answers your question, I think.

Rail: So in a sense, to oversimplify it, you create a kind of platform for others to

create art, and creating this platform is your art.

Simonds: Nope, I never take that as my art.

Rail: Why do you object to that?

Simonds: Because it's nothing to do with me, Irving. I'm not making that; they are making it. They are the artists. I make my own art. In fact, in Munich I went out in the street and made my own dwellings. My art is the history of the dwellings I have made for my imaginary civilization. I really feel that very strongly. This comes from issues of community work. There's no reason in community work for anybody to be the author. Community work is about community, and so as soon as it's somebody's work, it's not the community's work.

Rail: Yeah, but in art you have an author.

Simonds: Well, that's why I'm trying to say that there's a difference.

Rail: And you also meet that definition.

Simonds: You see, that's where we part ways because I've done so much community work, and in community work it's not about that. Everybody is contributing. It's the shared meaning that's important.

Rail: But you've run up against an art world that makes demands of its own and has definitions of its own.

Simonds: Yeah, but I think I've been avoiding them, rather than running up against them. I'm innocent, so if the art world has a problem, that's their problem. [*Laughs*]

Rail: I'll accept that. But Charles, you've created quite a reputation for yourself in the art world as an artist.

Simonds: Yeah, because I've done things in the art world.

Rail: Of course.

Simonds: I've had big shows.

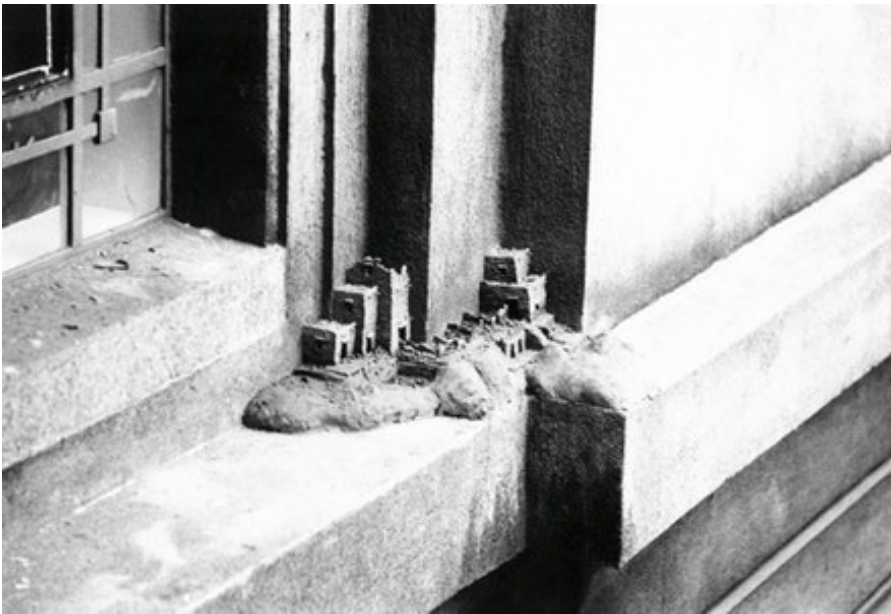
Rail: They have been defined as art by the art world.

Simonds: The things that I've done in the art world are fine and good as art in the art world and they've done quite well. But I do other things too, things that don't enter into the art world.

Rail: But we've expanded the definition of art now to include environments, concepts, performances, you name it.

Simonds: That's true. Certainly I was at the beginning of the arc of those things.

Rail: You certainly were.



Charles Simonds, *Dwelling*, Dublin, 1980.

Simonds: I agree with that. I've made some good art, but that's not all of what I do; I do things that are not aimed back towards the art world, things that don't need the art world for their meaning. I think the Munich project isolated some of the social and political aspects of what I do, the transactional aspects of the dwellings, how my work enters the world without your conventional frame of art. It allowed the children

to become the artists/authors. I am not sure the art world has a way to encompass or to perceive that for what it is, unable to integrate that into its definition of art. To me, that part of my work represents a large part of my different definition of art. How art can be part of a society, part of its daily life, not enshrined or isolated by a context. I don't think of the Munich project as me making my art. It's me allowing people to see how I have made my art, showing them that they can do that too and them making their art. If you ask me what have I accomplished there, I've been able to share, provoke and share, a way of creating things that allows you to look inside yourself. The kids in Munich are not making my art; they're making their art and, moreover, collectively.

Rail: How did they interact?

Simonds: Well, finally all these things were brought to one place, because the city wanted to make a—

Rail: —a show.

Simonds: Yeah, an “art show,” exactly right! Of course the city had a professional photographer who took pictures at all the neighborhood venues and from his photos of the kids I made a big collage that I put on a wall in the gallery. And the dwellings from all these different venues were brought very carefully and reassembled as one big sculptural installation in the gallery, the Kunstraum. So the most incredible mixtures of things all in one place, and all the kids, who were very, very different kids, who normally would never have met each other, they're standing there together pointing to the mural and saying, “Oh, that's me, that's me, that's me, and that's you!” shoulder to shoulder, but they never met, really. I said to one of the girls who worked with the architecture students at the TUM, “Downstairs are all the kids from Hasenbergl,” the ghetto, as you would say, “the Hasenbergl kids are all downstairs, you want to come down with me? We'll meet some of them.” I knew all these kids by now; and they all loved me. I said, “Let's go down and meet some of the other kids.”

Rail: Wouldn't do it.

Simonds: “I can't do that.” I said, “What's the matter?” “I just, I can't do that.”

Rail: So the lines were still . . .

Simonds: Oh, it was very painful. I don't know if they realized; for me it was very painful, very painful, and frightening.

Rail: But who can tell what effect?

Simonds: No question, an effect on the kids and also on Munich. And it's been covered in the press extensively. The director of the Arts and Culture department came to the initial press conference in the library where the kids from the refugee neighborhood had done their dwellings.

Rail: Right.

Simonds: He came, representing the city government, to give a speech: great. Apparently there's a trope in Munich that calls "little people" the people who are being pushed out by real estate speculators. In fact Munich rents are the highest in Germany and speculation is rampant, so this neighbourhood, this "ghetto," has similar problems of community control to those we had on the Lower East Side when I was there in the seventies. So as best as I could make out, he came to give a talk about "the little people" as though he was suggesting that the city by bringing Charles here was sticking up for the little people "Charles is protecting the little people and we are too, we're not going to let your neighborhood be destroyed." But at this press conference I had asked if some of the kids could come to talk about what they had made and what the project had meant to them. So of course they blew away the press conference because their voices were the most authentic. And all the press articles in the papers quoted them and showed pictures of what they'd done.

Rail: That was wonderful.

Simonds: Yes. So the Munich project finally has worked out; it exposed so many things, revealed so many things. The kids were able to express something about who they are, which was very trenchant, and at the end the city's director of Arts and Culture, Hans-Georg Koppers, lauded the project, saying it "requires us to think beyond the status quo of urbanity and civil cooperation. It is a testament to the responsibility that a civic society must maintain towards itself." Fair enough.

Rail: I'd like to interject that we're not only talking about a project in Germany but also a project in India, involving entirely different kinds of children and childhood experience.

Simonds: Yes, but it's a long story going from the streets of the Lower East Side to a rural village school in southern India! So. To be continued.

Rail: Just quickly, how is the India project developing? It's not like the one in

Munich.

Simonds: No, no, it's very different, entirely my own initiative. It's the serendipity of me asking the proverbial question in my work, "Do I have anything to offer?" Here I am. Here's how I think about things. Does this have any use for you or any possibility for you?" There's an openness and expressiveness in southern India, and I think part of it has to do with that. They're much more open to a simple gift.

Rail: Just to anticipate what we'll be talking about, there seems to be something different about the India project as I view it: you've fallen in love with these kids.

Simonds: Oh, for sure, and they've fallen in love with me, completely. But I'm in love with the kids in Munich just as much.

Rail: I have a feeling it's a little different.

Simonds: No, no, it's the same. That part is absolutely the same. I mean some more or less, but there's a certain moment of kid-ness that I find so magical, there's no better or worse kid—they're all great in that way, at that moment. I think what I do allows kids to be that way. The most telling thing about all the photographs—in Munich we had a professional photographer, so we have pictures of all these kids working, and the expressions on these kids' faces are so beautiful because they're engrossed in the kind of wonderland of fantasy, and they're completely candid. It's as if they are completely relaxed and their faces become themselves in a tender and poignant way. Kids being themselves, you can't help but fall in love with them. People look at the pictures and everybody says, "These kids are so beautiful! They're such great kids." And they are! And this very same thing happened with the kids I worked with at the mental clinic, although we can't reproduce the photos, every one of them relaxes into a wonderful moment, to a child, everyone says it was a wonderful experience, "Rated eleven, on a scale of one to ten," as one of the therapists said.

CONTRIBUTOR

Irving Sandler

IRVING SANDLER was an art critic, art historian, and writer. The second volume of his memoirs, *Swept Up By Art: An Art Critic in the Post-Avant-Garde Era*, was published by Rail Editions in 2015.

RECOMMENDED ARTICLES



Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948 - 1980

By Bartolomeo Sala

OCT 2018 | ARTSEEN

As curators Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić illustrate, in Tito's Yugoslavia, architecture was not only viewed as a way to reconstruct a physically ravaged country, and promote Pan-Slavic identity; it was also believed to be capable of making the abstract idea of a better society tangible.



Invasive Architecture

By Maurice Maultz

JUL-AUG 2019 | FIELD NOTES

Camouflage is precisely not invisibility. Light doesn't pass through camouflage, and neither does camouflage project an image of its surroundings onto itself. Camouflage is very simply this: the confusion of figure for ground.

INCONVERSATION

Mediterranean Migration Monologues

Director Michael Ruf with Maresi Starzmann and Farhiya Hassan

NOV 2019 | THEATER

A ferry service that connects Morocco and Spain offers tourists rides

between the European and African continents. The trip of one and a half hours costs \$40 (US) for a one-way ride. For refugees trying to cross the sea on rubber dinghies or fiberglass boats, the same journey takes days and it can cost up to several thousand dollars.

Thoughts on Mies's Lemke House: Architecture—Feminism—Philosophy

By Joseph Masheck

OCT 2018 | 1 BY 1

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Bauhaus, owing to Hitler, and moving to Chicago. Karl Lemke, who ran a graphic arts business that catered to the art world, was a friend of the architect. That this work entailed a great deal of thought on Mies's part is attested to by a huge quantity of preliminary drawings, starting from much more ambitious ideas.³ The economy was taking its toll; yet something excellent was envisioned. Two significant features of the project do not seem acknowledged, however: the role of a woman designer, and the fact that the house, small as it is, is an extraordinary example of the influence on Mies of his most admired living philosopher, Romano Guardini.