

Monday, December 1, 1980

Adult gift givers find shopping is child's play

By KAREN SUE HERMES

When Linda Schlesinger told her architect to reserve 100 square feet of her new children's boutique for a play area, he "screamed."

"You're wasting precious retail space," he said.

But the owner of Rainbow Lollipop Inc., Somerset Mall, Troy, hasn't found the play area a waste.

"What it eliminates for small children (who would rather be home playing than shopping) is tears," she said. "That makes shopping more relaxing for mothers."

Play areas were a phenomenon in August 1977 when Mrs. Schlesinger opened Rainbow Lollipop in Birmingham. In May 1979, the West Bloomfield resident moved the children's store to Somerset Mall.

Today, several stores, including at least one national chain, feature play areas that range from corner tables with picture books and crayons to elaborate play sculptures with built-in television sets.

Parents who can't afford to hire a babysitter or don't want their children to notice what Santa is buying for them find play areas useful.

Children's Place, a Connecticut-based children's sportswear chain, has play sculptures with television sets in each of its 34 stores, including five in the Detroit area.

JANE RAPPLEVEA, director of retail operations for Children's Place, said the chain's play sculptures benefit its philosophy that "shopping should be enjoyable for both the parent and child."

She doesn't know if play sculptures result in parents buying more because they are more relaxed. No one has done a study on that, she said.

"What you find is that if the child is occupied, the mother has more time to look or browse," she said.

"And the child is perhaps a little more agreeable to enter the

store in the first place because he knows there is something for him inside."

Lee Formicola, manager of Kitchen Glamor in Avon Township, said, "Kids hit the door and know exactly where to run."

The boutique has a chalkboard, coloring books and crayons set up for them to play while their parents shop or attend special programs on food preparation.

"It's fun to watch four or five kids who don't know each other sit down and all of a sudden start playing together and writing each other's names," Ms. Formicola said.

She added that the play area was the idea of owners Chris and Toula Patsalis of Bloomfield Hills.

"This really is kind of a boring place for kids," she said.

ONE WEST Bloomfield shoe store provides a club house complete with stairway, slide and bean bag chair for kids to flop in.

"It keeps them occupied while they are waiting to be waited on," said Davey Gilmer, manager of Hack's Kid Power Shoe World in West Bloomfield Plaza.

"Also, when it's time to shop for shoes, they're going to say 'Let's go to Kid Power.'"

Linda Rutkowski, assistant manager for Children's Place in Oakland Mall, Troy, said parents love the play area there.

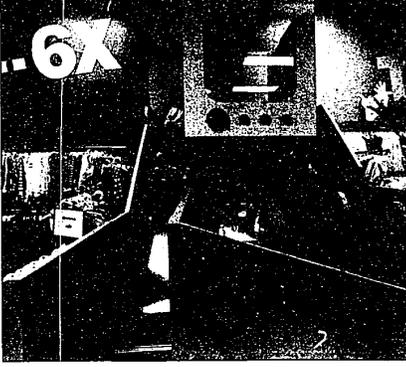
"They think it's the greatest. Most of the time they laugh and ask, 'How can you (salespeople) work with all those kids?'"

Dorothy Kubat, manager of Rainbow Lollipop, said parents consistently compliment the boutique on its play area. The 10-by-10-foot converted dressing room comes with a sign warning, "For Kids Only."

"It helps the parent to know her child is in one area."

Play areas do have some disadvantages, store owners and employees agree.

"A lot of times parents drop their kids off and go to other stores," said Ms. Rutkowski, the Children's Place manager.



Formica play sculptures with television sets make shopping at Children's Place fun for Nick Fassinio of Troy. (Staff photo by David Frank)

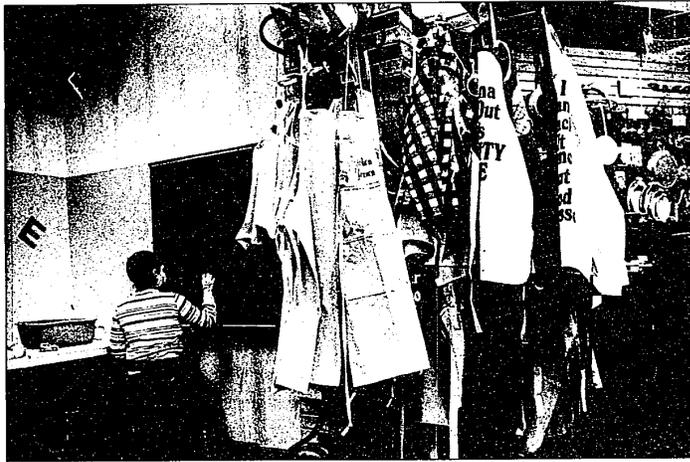
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— Lee Formicola, manager Kitchen Glamor



Eileen Hemmi blows up a balloon for son Todd in Hack's Kid Power Shoe World. (Staff photo by John Stano)

A play area tucked away in a corner of Kitchen Glamor makes the time she spends while mom is browsing and shopping a little less boring for Lannie Weisman.



Cranbrook inaugural rates honors for notable pageantry

"Vivat Academia!" At the reception following the inauguration of new Cranbrook Educational Community president Dan M. Martin, a guest remarked to Martin's wife Susan Martin, "What a beautiful day for your husband."

The friendly and alert Mrs. Martin corrected, "What a beautiful day for Cranbrook." Indeed it was.

Nov. 21 began with a luncheon at Kingswood School for 180 guests who heard greetings from representatives of the educational complex. Interim president Ed Lerchen was the master of ceremonies. Speakers included Charles Clippert, Roy Slade, Leslie Johnston, Pat Hartmann, Walter McCarthy, Lynn Barnhouse and Brookside School student Wallace Cripps.

A pageant-filled ceremony followed at Christ Church Cranbrook. Art Academy Women's Committee president Jean Schuler called the pomp and circumstance fabulous.

"It was very impressive, remarkably precise. I'm amazed that everything went like clockwork," she said.

"Everything" included a procession of flag bearers, student and

suburban accents

Sally Gerak

alumni representatives, delegates from schools and universities and professional societies, faculty, administration, trustees, speakers, clergy, a macebearer and the new president — all wearing academic robes.

Salutations were spoken by Ed Perkins, chairman of the educational complex board of trustees; George Romney, representing the state of Michigan; Harold Shapiro, representing the University of Michigan; and Henry Scripps Booth, representing the Cranbrook founding family.

Additional salutations by close personal friends of Martin and performances by the Kingswood-Cranbrook Dancers, the Kingswood Madrigal Singers and the Cranbrook Schools Concert Choir added to the spectacle, which was attended by 600 civic, business and academic leaders.

"I've never seen anything like that," said one of the 400 who proceeded to the Academy of Art for a champagne reception. It was well past the scheduled closing hour of 6 p.m. when the personable Martins greeted the final receiving line guest then moved on to join next door neighbors Jan and Bob Swanson in the gallery.

The two couples have something in addition to an address in common since Swanson's grandfather Eiel Saarinen was the academy's first president and designer of the four Cranbrook institutions.

So convivial was the gathering that academy president Roy Slade was forced to flash the gallery lights as a signal for guests to leave. He explained that another reception, one for designer Niels Dillreut, was scheduled to begin at 7:30 the same night.

Thus ended the week-long inaugural celebration directed by Ben Snyder, who was assisted by Janet Johnson, Carol Lebo, Joseph Merluzzi, Barbara Ostermann, John Sanderson, Robert Vares, Diane Spence, Margot Snyder and an army of volunteers.

Finding A Magic Carpet: "This is a good idea," said Herb Boyer as he and his wife Barbara surveyed fellow patrons at a Common Ground benefit on Nov. 22. "I've supported Common Ground for years but I've never known who else cared about its work," Boyer added.



Jan and Bob Swanson, left, have more than an address in common with Susan and Dan Martin. Swanson's grandfather Eiel Saarinen was the Art Academy's first president and designer of the four Cranbrook educational institutions. Martin is the educational complex's newest president. (Photo by Sally Gerak)

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