

Simon Nicholson's Theory Of Loose Parts

The following are quotes from Nicholson's 1971 *Landscape Architecture* article outlining his theory of loose parts.

The theory of loose parts says, quite simply, the following:
'In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kinds of variables in it'

It does not require much imagination to realize that most environments that do not work...such as schools, playgrounds, hospitals, day-care centres, international airports, art galleries and museums, do not do so because they do not meet the 'loose parts' requirement; instead, they are clean, static and impossible to play around with. What has happened is that adults—in the form of professional artists, architects, landscape architects and planners—have had all the fun playing with their own materials, concepts and planning-alternatives, and then builders have had all the fun building the environments out of real materials; and thus has all the fun and creativity been stolen: children and adults and the community have been grossly cheated and the educational-cultural system makes sure that they hold the belief that this is 'right'.

There is evidence that all children love to interact with variables, such as materials and shapes, smells and other physical phenomena, such as electricity, magnetism, and gravity; media such as gases and fluids; sounds, music, and motion; chemical interactions, cooking and fire; and other people, and animals, plants, words, concepts and ideas. With all these things all children love to play, experiment, discover and invent and have fun.

...there is a growing awareness that the most interesting and vital loose parts are those that we have around us every day in the wilderness, the countryside, the city and the ghetto.

Simon Nicholson (1934-1990) was a painter, sculptor, and lecturer known in the early learning world for his Theory of Loose Parts

