

Creative Canadian Children

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The Art of Aluminum Foil. Jane Hinton and Hugh Oliver, General Publishing, 1974. 100 pp. \$4.95 paper.

What To Do Till the Garbageman Arrives: A Miser's Craft Manual, Ruth Johnson, Gage, 1976. 117 pp. \$6.95 hardcover.

One of our major reference tools for Canadian children's literature in English, Sheila Egoff's *The Republic of Childhood*, makes no mention of books concerned with arts and crafts suitable for use by Canadian children. Evidently output in this subject area in the past has been minimal, insignificant, and of poor quality. Therefore, it is a pleasure to note the appearance of two excellent books on creative crafts for Canadian children.

The former, Jane Hinton's *The Art of Aluminum Foil*, is an attractive, well-planned book of crafts constructed with aluminum foil. There are many ideas to tax the artistic imagination—they range from hanging decorations and table decorations to costumes, reliefs, and pictures. There is also a wide range in the complexity of the designs—from a simple pom-pom to hang on a Christmas tree to the intricate parts of a knight's costume. Approximately one-half of the book deals with crafts for Christmas; these include bells, angels, wreaths and chains. All are attractive and striking when finished, yet fairly simple in their construction.

The book is published in a large format and is sturdy, although it is paperbound. The attractive colour photographs of each of the twenty-five completed crafts add to the excitement of the creative spirit.

Each craft is approached first by a "Materials" section and then by an "Instructions" section. The materials list includes all regular and special items required in making the craft; the instructions are given with simplicity and are accompanied by helpful black-and-white photographs which explain carefully each step of the creative process.

The Art of Aluminum Foil is very flexible in its appeal. Many of the

projects can be done by primary and elementary school-age children, if the teacher or parent is available to interpret the step-by-step format. Other projects will interest the teen-aged and adult arts and crafts group, while still others will make charming items for sale at adult craft fairs or senior citizen bazaars.

Although the cost of aluminum foil is relatively high, the attractive and appealing professional look of the finished product compensates for the cost involved. Because of the versatility of the crafts and the broad appeal of the book, *The Art of Aluminum Foil* should be found in Christmas craft book collections and in libraries serving children, young adults, and adults.

The second book, *What To Do Till the Garbageman Arrives*, is more universal in its theme. Rather than being a typical guide to crafts, it is an ecological treatise. Mrs. Johnson believes that he who creates artistic, imaginative crafts should be a penny-pincher who recycles the typical daily garbage of the regular household. The garbage of our "throw-away," wasteful society can be turned into useful objects and interesting decorations. Mrs. Johnson describes a wide range of possibilities; the topics include children's games and toys, kitchen gadgets and aids, backyard gadgets, recreation room decorations, camp and cottage aids, party decorations and Christmas ornaments. There is also an old-and-new ideas section for more time-consuming creative projects.

This book is a sturdy hardcover, in a large format. At the beginning of each chapter is a full-page black-and-white photograph of most items made in that chapter. Each craft is approached by a "Materials" section, and then by a "Method" section. The materials list, as in *The Aluminum Foil* materials section, includes items necessary for making the craft; however, it is not as complete as the list in the former text—e.g. glue, scotch tape or scissors are often omitted. The method of making objects is described in step-by-step detail. Although there are not illustrations of all objects or steps, almost every page contains helpful green, black, and white sketches of either the finished product, or the article in various stages of construction. An added section, entitled "Hints," is included for some of the crafts; it discusses alternative methods of construction and/or further uses of the object.

What To Do Till the Garbageman Arrives is a storehouse of information and ideas for recycling even the most useless kinds of garbage. Whereas the former book discusses only twenty-five items for construction, the latter covers over one hundred crafts, as well as giving extra ideas about basic ecology. You may think that the author tries to cover too many items; but, this is not the effect of the book; rather, she expresses in many ways her enthusiasm for re-using everything, and not wasting anything.

Like *The Art of Aluminum Foil*, this book is flexible in its appeal. Its projects can be created by school children, when the instructions are interpreted by an adult, or the book can be used directly as an instructional manual by teenagers and adults interested in creative arts and crafts.

With the former book, the cost of creating was one of the main factors limiting its use. However, in the latter, cost is practically a non-

existent aspect of the creative process; the glue, nails, tape and paint add only an extra few cents to the cost of the object. Creativity without high cost was a practice of our ancestors which many of us have lost over the years. Mrs. Johnson dreams of a Utopian pollution-free society in which all garbage is re-used. Perhaps her book will help to improve the present wasteful condition of our society.

Both *The Art of Aluminum Foil* and *What To Do Till the Garbageman Arrives* are written by women living in Toronto. Both books are practical guides to creating decorative and functional items for the home. Both can be most easily used directly by young people and adults interested in crafts; or items can be made by children, if details of construction are interpreted and supervised by an older person.

Although the former book was published almost three years ago, it may have been missed in regular library selection processes, since it is paperbound. Since the latter is a recently published book, it, too, may not have yet been acquired by Canadian libraries. Both books would be valuable additions to book collections, whether in school, public or personal libraries, since they are well-designed, carefully illustrated, and practical in their approach to crafts for all ages. Both will truly enhance the artistic imagination and the creative spirit.

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