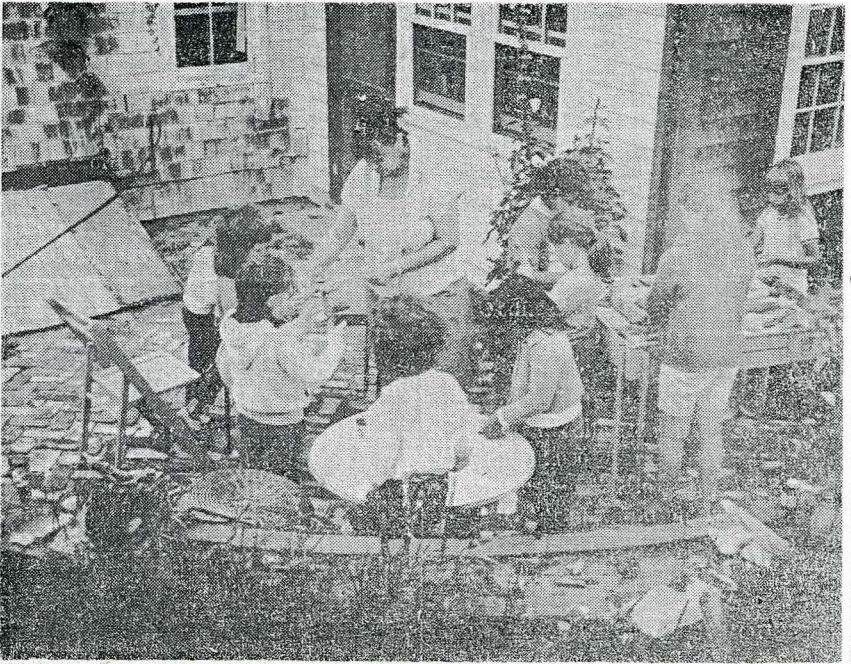


## Ella Jackson's Children's Classes



ART IS DISCOVERY — Ella Jackson and the children in her creative painting class hard at work on their latest project.

If someone suddenly announced to a group of children that it was time for refreshments, you would most likely expect to see and hear some reaction from them. But do not expect the usual if you are visiting one of Ella Jackson's creative painting classes for children. After all when one is engaged in making the future whale or a dragon that breathes wire, one does not take time out for juice and cookies.

The assignment for that day was to bring in an assortment of driftwood, and the children had done so. What did the various shapes look like? A fish, a tree, a face, a teapot. However in using a piece of driftwood to make a construction, you do not have to make it look like anything real. You can make an imaginary fish or bird or anything. On the tables were boxes of buttons, colored glass, modeling clay and paints. What more would one need to inspire an artistic creation? The children went to work with avid enthusiasm.

Mickey made a "Bird With Big Feet." The piece of driftwood had a blue button in the middle. Attached to the wood were two wires that looked like running feet.

Eve painted her piece of driftwood blue and decorated it with buttons. She called it the "Imaginary Anything." She explained that it started out to be a fish that became a bird that became anything.

Jessica announced the name of her construction as being "Fish." He had a silver button for an eye and cloth fins. "He looks worried," Rachel decided.

Judy took a piece of driftwood shaped like a teapot and added buttons to it. She put on a wire handle and set it on a stone base. She called it "The Teapot That Grew Flowers."

Ann made a whale that was painted yellow. "Did you ever see a yellow whale?" she inquired. "No, because this one is 'The Future Whale'."

Laurie made an "Imaginary Dog." Some one stated that it did not have to look like a dog because it was an imaginary dog. "She can make it anything she wants."

Susan came up with a "Dragon That Breathe Wire." It consisted of two pieces of driftwood attached to a stone. One piece was the dragon. It had sea shell wings, button eyes and wires coming out of its nose. Judy noted that "wire" rhymes with "fire." The other piece was a tree. It was smaller than the dragon. "That shows how big the dragon is," Susan explained.

Robbin attached a piece of driftwood to a stone and called it "The North Wind Resting on a Cloud." One of the children walked by and said "Hello, North Wind." Another child turned to Robbin and observed: "He looks awfully dark and sinister."

Kathy stuck two pieces of driftwood together with clay and had a fascinating "Woodpecker Boat."

Rachael attached buttons and wire to a piece of wood and declared that she had "A Wand For A Witch—A Bad Witch." Later she added another wire to the wood and reported that she could now change anybody into anything.

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When all the constructions were ready the children were given a chance to comment upon them. "I encourage them to tell what they like about the creations. I think it is important that children start verbalizing their ideas. I am very conscious of creativity in all forms. Even the naming of a picture is an exercise in the creative use of words, in expressing their feelings about what they have done."

The next project was to make crayon drawings of the constructions. After due consideration the children decided to draw somebody else's instead of their own because they could always draw their own at home. It would help them to remember somebody else's, too.

"When you draw something, you do not have to copy it exactly," Mrs. Jackson advised them. "Remember when we drew the flowers how some of us thought of the idea of growth and tried to express that."

"I try to maintain a kind of balance," Mrs. Jackson went on to explain later, "between free creation and observation. First of all I let them draw freely what they see so their imaginations will have free reign. Then I call attention to the object they have drawn and point out what they saw or did not see in it. It is important that they sharpen their powers of observation. Creating freely and observing are inter-dependent, I feel. In other words there should be a balance between freedom of expression

and disciplined control. As people grow up, unfortunately much of their fanciful imagination is lost. I want them to always be aware of the beauty in a leaf, a stone, a twig. Then the romance of the commonplace will continue to bring enrichment to their lives."

When the children had finished their crayon drawings and discussed them, they went on to paint over them with watercolors. "The crayon shows through," one student observed. "But yellow paint covers the crayon up," another pointed out.

"I like to have the children make discoveries for themselves," Mrs. Jackson declares. "They discovered that some colors are more transparent, some more opaque. They learned that water and wax do not mix. They are becoming aware of the chemistry of materials.

"And they are learning to work together, to respond to nature and to one another.

"Creativity can do much for the individual. Children express themselves in their work. If they can see the fine qualities in their own work, they will gain respect for themselves.

"Art is discovery. The exploration is endless. Never is any work stale. Sometimes the students will stumble on to something accidentally, sometimes with intent. But the important thing is that they discover and keep on discovering all of their lives."

D.J.