

Streets, garbage-children's playground

A city is many things to many people. To a businessman it is the center of business activity. To a housewife it is a maze of shopping centers and congested traffic. To a child, however, it is a vast and varied playground filled with things needing exploration, imaginary playmates, or back-alley football games.

At least that is the view presented by Charles Zerner, graduate student in architecture, Tuesday evening at his public lecture "On the Indignity of Being a Child in the City: Field Notes on Finding Moon Walkers in the Alleys of Chinatown and Empty Playgrounds."

Zerner, a recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, said, "The city is an island—a man-made thing with its own ecological niches." Zerner spent several months studying children's playing in the city, "looking at niches that children find. Not the ones that are made for them, like playgrounds and parks, but the ones they discover for themselves."

The word "play" has two different connotations, said Zerner. The traditional "playing around" definition of play is not a legitimate one, he said. Rather, "play should be looked at as something that is crucially important to the development of a child," he said.

Through his study of children's play, Zerner developed what he called a "through the looking glass" theory on play behavior. He said children's play does not mirror the surrounding adult world, but instead, revolves around the various objects that a child sees before him.

"The child is an alchemist—a human being at a stage in life who is able to transform trash in an alley and abandoned apartment buildings into his own world," Zerner said.

Further, Zerner said the ultra-modern playgrounds that architects design today are not conducive to children's playing behavior. "Play flows around, about, in and out of the environment and it relies on the spontaneous feeling of the child. It's hard to design something to accommodate these things," he said.

During Zerner's lecture, he presented various movie slides of children at play in the Chinatown and Fillmore districts of San Francisco. He said the children in these districts play in the parking lots, the alleys, the streets and on the sidewalks, rather than at playgrounds. The reason for this, he said, "is because these areas are more receptive to the child's needs."

Although Zerner didn't fully define what a child's needs are, and although he said he had no set solution for designing facilities that will accommodate children's play, he did suggest a few things that would be more receptive to children's play.

He said having different levels and surfaces on the various structures within a city would help. Perches that children could sit on and different contours of streets would also be more conducive to children's play, he said.

Petition circulated to maintain First Avenue freeway ramps

The Whiteaker Community Action Group (WCAG), a recently formed organization of West Eugene citizens, is presently circulating a petition in an effort to see that the existing First Avenue entrance and exit ramps onto Interstate 105 are not closed upon completion of the Washington-Jefferson ramps.

As it now stands, the First Avenue ramps are scheduled to be closed after the new ramps are completed.

Margaret Rossoff, a member of WCAG, said the group's initial goal "is to show the city council that a lot of people want the ramps kept open" and from there to getting a public hearing on the issue.

Four engineers who addressed the WCAG last November "said a curve in the highway, the grade of the ramps and a lack of proper storage space for cars waiting for traffic lights were the reasons for the closure," Rossoff said.

WCAG feels that these problems are not sufficient to warrant the closure of the ramp. "We feel the ramps could be rebuilt with lower grades and a lower speed limit could be posted," she said.

Al Williams, Eugene city traffic engineer, told the Emerald Thursday that the ramps would be closed "because for safety reasons the Federal Highway Commission would not

approve the extension with those ramps in there."

Williams gave the major reason for the closure as being a weaving motion created when ramps are set closely together. "It would be almost impossible to explain in a written article," he said. "When you say you have a weaving problem, most people who have lived in Los Angeles, San Francisco or Seattle pretty much understand, especially if they've experienced it during a peak hour. This was explained to them at that meeting (in November) and those that chose not to have an open mind, didn't understand. It takes an engineering mind to understand." Williams went on to say that Los Angeles at one time had ramps that created a weaving problem, but they were closed by the state for safety reasons.

Rossoff said, however, that WCAG has "a letter written in 1970 by a highway engineer stating that the only reason for closing the ramps is so that the Roosevelt and Skinner's Butte freeways could be built." When asked about the letter, Williams declined to comment.

In addition to only insufficient reasons for closing the ramps, the petition states:

—traffic now using First Avenue will be forced to go down sixth, seventh and Blair, clogging already crowded streets.

—traffic to the River Road district and Whiteaker neighborhood would be routed across railroad tracks, causing delays and traffic hazards.

—closing the ramps would make access to Skinner's Butte Park more difficult for people living north of the river.

—despite statements by the Highway Department, the weave is not an insurmountable problem. The main problem in keeping the ramps open seems to be the proposed Roosevelt freeway.

According to Rossoff, the amount of signatures acquired "has been good."

At this time there is no projected date for presenting the petitions to the city council. "We'll probably determine at the next meeting how it is going and might be able to tell then," she said.

WCAG will have a table on the EMU terrace Tuesday and Wednesday from 11:30 to 1:30.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 30, 7:30 p.m. at the Whiteaker Elementary school, 21 North Grand.

Crisis Center Committee searches for funding

The Crisis Center Advisory Committee is faced with a problem that many advisory committees to student services run into this time of year. Where is their funding for the next fiscal year going to come from?

The meeting that transpired Monday was called in order that the committee as a group could draw up a letter responding to Robert Bowlin's request that the committee make a recommendation to him on continuation (and direction) of the Crisis Center.

Bowlin is head of student personnel at the University. According to Deak vanArsdel, director of the Center and a doctoral candidate in counseling psychology, the center, since its inception three years ago, has faced a "financial crisis" every year.

The committee must look for alternatives for funding the center, but the general consensus agreed upon by the committee is that the center should get guaranteed funds from the state, as many other student services do on campus, in order to make it a more viable program.

In the past, the center has received funds from the ASUO Senate, health services, and the Counseling Center combined. As it stands now, none of these groups are willing to oversee the program by themselves with their own individual monies.

The Center is staffed by three and is described by vanArsdel as, "something like a fire department, we're there when needed. We're more student oriented than White Bird and deal mostly with problems of anxiety and depression."

If anyone has a problem of any type and they need help, they can get this help by dialing 686-4486 between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m.

OSPIRG needs volunteers

The Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) is calling for volunteers to help conduct studies dealing with various environmental and social concerns. Sixty-six such projects are currently underway, ranging from noise pollution and reforestation to sex discrimination in credit.

According to Steve Park, OSPIRG treasurer, a current list of projects is available to interested students in the OSPIRG office, M111 EMU.

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New overseas programs are calling for more and more of you. We might have turned you off (or down) last year. But Peace Corps changes as the needs of the world changes. If you're a senior in Liberal Arts, come and see us next week on the ERB terrace.

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