

This book is about children growing up, learning and playing in a street environment: learning first about the feel and appearance of physical textures—split stucco, flakeworn pavingstone, cobble gutters, disintegrating rendering, cracked and peeling paint, castiron, old wood—and then, having accepted their surroundings, learning that relationships with other children, with other people, are what matter most; playing with whatever chance objects are available, improvising occupation from anything, sometimes apparently from nothing.

The photographs and text attempt a penetration of the enclosed world of the child, revealing the solemnity of young children who are puzzling out why people do things, why people are, trying to place the new within their own experience,

failing, and thus enlarging that experience; their not knowing that smiling is the easiest way of establishing a relationship, and thus being free of falsity and vacuity; their unselfconscious acceptance of the opposite sex up to about seven, and their clannishness after that age; their capacity for absolute relaxation and unconscious grace; their absorption in the immediate; and, above all, their enormous confidence, their curiosity about living, and their acceptance and transcendence of their environment.

The characters of these working-class and immigrant children are seen in relation to the conditions which helped to create them: there are no close-ups of faces. The text attempts to complement the visual, adding the dimension of time to the static moment fixed by the camera: italic, roman, and bold roman typefaces are used to approximate to subconscious, conscious, and spoken thought respectively.

