



**WHAT ARE THE CURRENT DIRECTIONS AND OBJECTIVES?**

Phase II of the Children's Experimental Workshop for the Handicapped is now being implemented. Phase I was a process of testing a variety of innovative techniques and methods. These aspects of the program are being refined for future publication and dissemination.

Four objectives have been formulated as the basis of the program:

1. to use the ARTS as a vehicle to make national parks and park programs more accessible to all people.
2. to facilitate innovative arts programming through encouraging active participation of professionals in the performing and applied arts.
3. to enlarge the focus and development of components of the program to involve handicapped individuals directly as instructors in the program.
4. to offer special populations, and those working with them, a practical vehicle for immediate use.

**WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF GLEN ECHO PARK?**

Glen Echo Park's buildings once housed a popular amusement park, which was abandoned in the late '60's. Today the park has a "Felliniesque" quality about it with its "Hall of Mirrors" recycled into the pottery and design workshop, the "Penny Arcade" turned children's theatre, and the old but continuously operating carousel spinning its magic.

Prior to its amusement park phase, Glen Echo Park had been a National Chautauqua Assembly Center in the 1890's. The Chautauqua concept which emphasized bringing cultural and educational opportunities within reach of the total populace is interpreted, today, through the Children's Experimental Workshop programs as well as in the special events and classes conducted at Glen Echo Park, under the direction of the National Park Service.

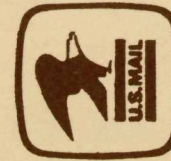
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**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STAFF**

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**CHILDRENS EXPERIMENTAL WORKSHOP**  
 Glen Echo Park  
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 EXPERIMENTAL  
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*National Park Service*

## WHAT IS THE CHILDREN'S EXPERIMENTAL WORKSHOP?

It is a year-round participatory program in the visual and performing arts for children from the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area, including the culturally disadvantaged, multi-ethnic, and multiply-handicapped. It began in the summer of 1972 as a multicultural arts day camp at Glen Echo Park. The program is collaboratively designed and implemented by a staff of professional artists using a variety of cultural themes to integrate 4 workshop disciplines: dance/music, theatre arts, pottery, and design. Each workshop process relates to another through the translation of basic environmental values into arts experiences. The staff uses a number of themes such as:

- 1) "The Creation of the World: the nature of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water"
- 2) "The American Indian Heritage: the origins of Myth and Symbol"
- 3) "The Life, Character, and Imagery of African Culture"

The focus of each theme stresses a reverence for all things, stimulates the joy of celebration, and serves as a fertile ground for innovative ideas.



## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EXPERIMENTAL?

Webster's definition is "of or based on experience rather than theory." The workshops are process-oriented and designed to explore and encourage positive approaches to working with children in the arts. There is no win or fail, just commitment to what is being experienced and communicated. Artist and student are co-learners on this journey. As they share these discoveries the artist is constantly renewed and inspired. The emphasis is not so much on the result but on what is evolving, the investigation, the concentration, the commitment of artist and child. Technique becomes the ability to breathe the spirit of our lives into what we are doing.

## HOW DID THE HANDICAPPED PROGRAM BEGIN?

It was born out of a need expressed by a teacher working in a school for the blind and culturally disadvantaged. Her concern was for an intensive and qualified arts exposure as an adjunct to an otherwise strictly academic curriculum.

The existing program was easily adapted and expanded to meet the needs of the multiply-handicapped. For example, after research into facility preparation, the workshop doors were widened to accommodate wheelchairs, and the work areas and bathrooms made fully accessible.

Response from administrators, parents and students exceeded all expectations. The impact and values generated by the program urged its continuation and expansion.



Documentation of the program is a vital part of the ongoing process and occurs via written project plans and evaluations by the staff, video, and photographic documentation. This, in addition to the school-parent evaluations, insures a comprehensive guide for others interested in implementing such a program.



## HOW DOES THIS PROGRAM DIFFER FROM EXISTING ONES?

We have found that public schools of special education in the Washington Metropolitan area offer very little, if any, high quality arts training. The Children's Experimental Workshop provides a viable and accessible resource to those schools interested in supplementing their academic curriculum. Built into the program is an in-service teacher training aspect which stresses the multi-arts approach to the learning of academic subjects. School teachers and their students participate jointly in the workshop series. In the past, arts programs for the multiply-handicapped have rarely been on a continuing long term basis. The Children's Experimental Workshop offers a series of 10 week arts training workshops which meet during *regular school hours*. Transportation to and from Glen Echo Park is furnished by the schools. Funding for the programs, thus far, has been provided by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. The program is under the auspices of the National Park Service.

