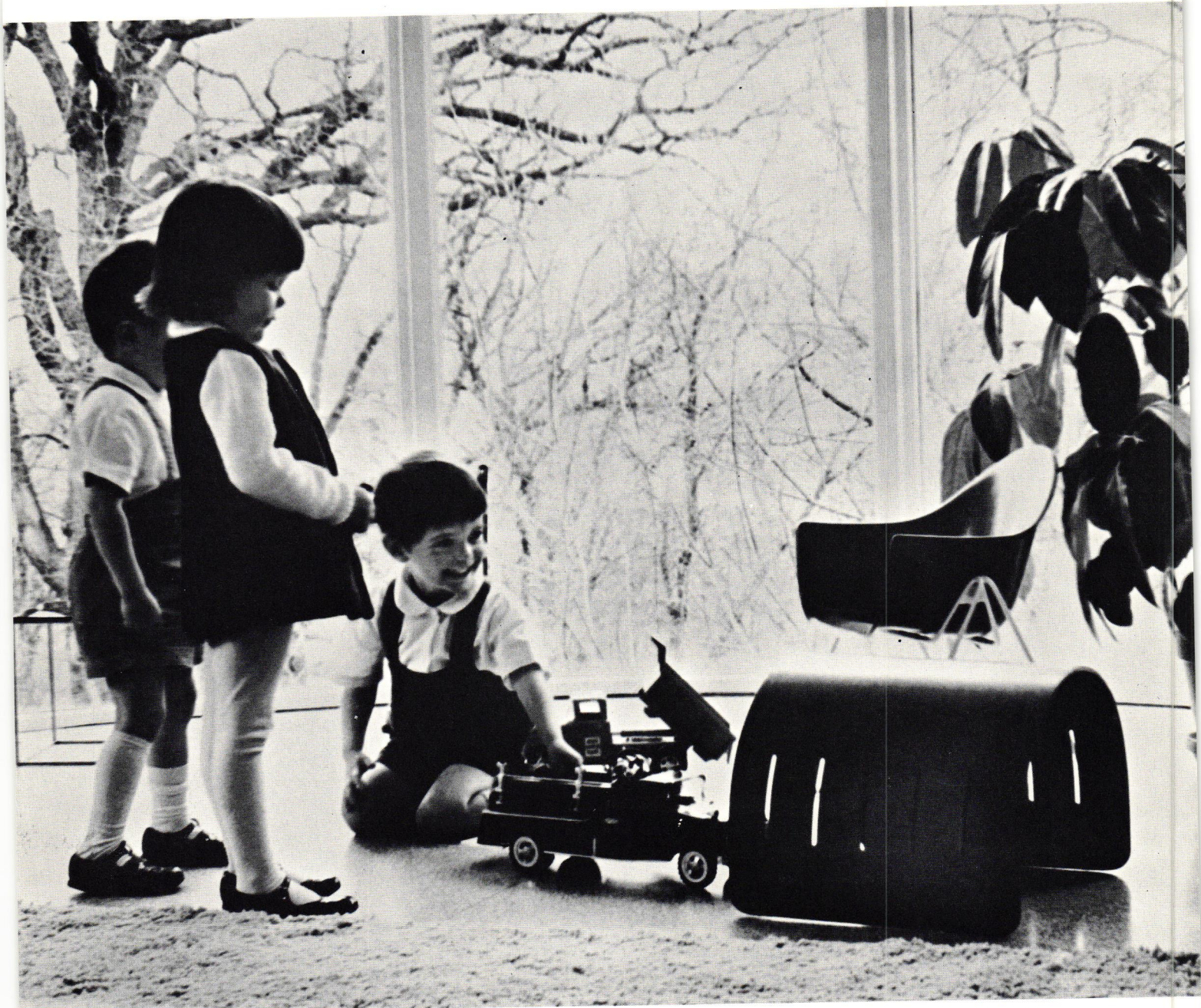






Children's Furniture

Design Quarterly 57 Walker Art Center 1963



introduction

Children's furniture through the ages has generally reflected the stylistic manner of the period rather than an understanding of the child. Despite our extensive research and preoccupation with the problems of childhood, we continue to design miniature versions of adult styles. Furniture for the early years shows little attention to function or to the changing patterns of contemporary living.

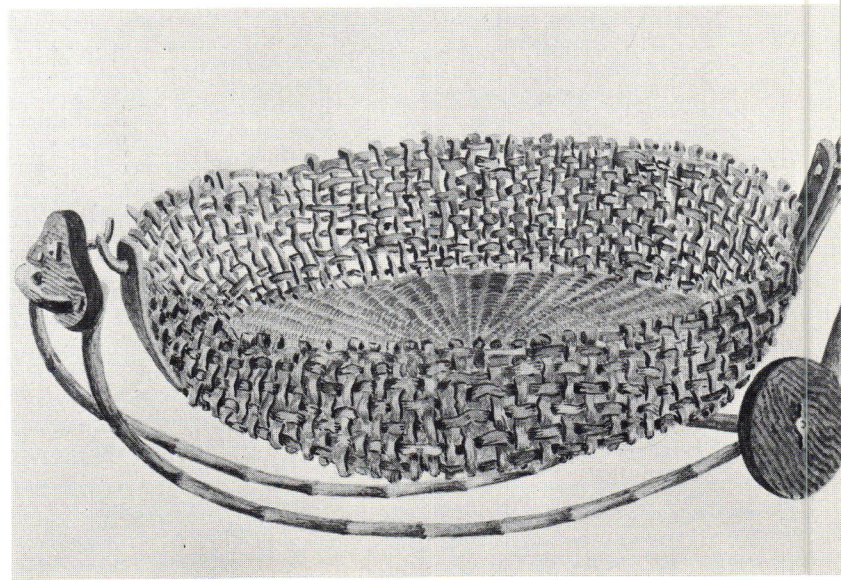
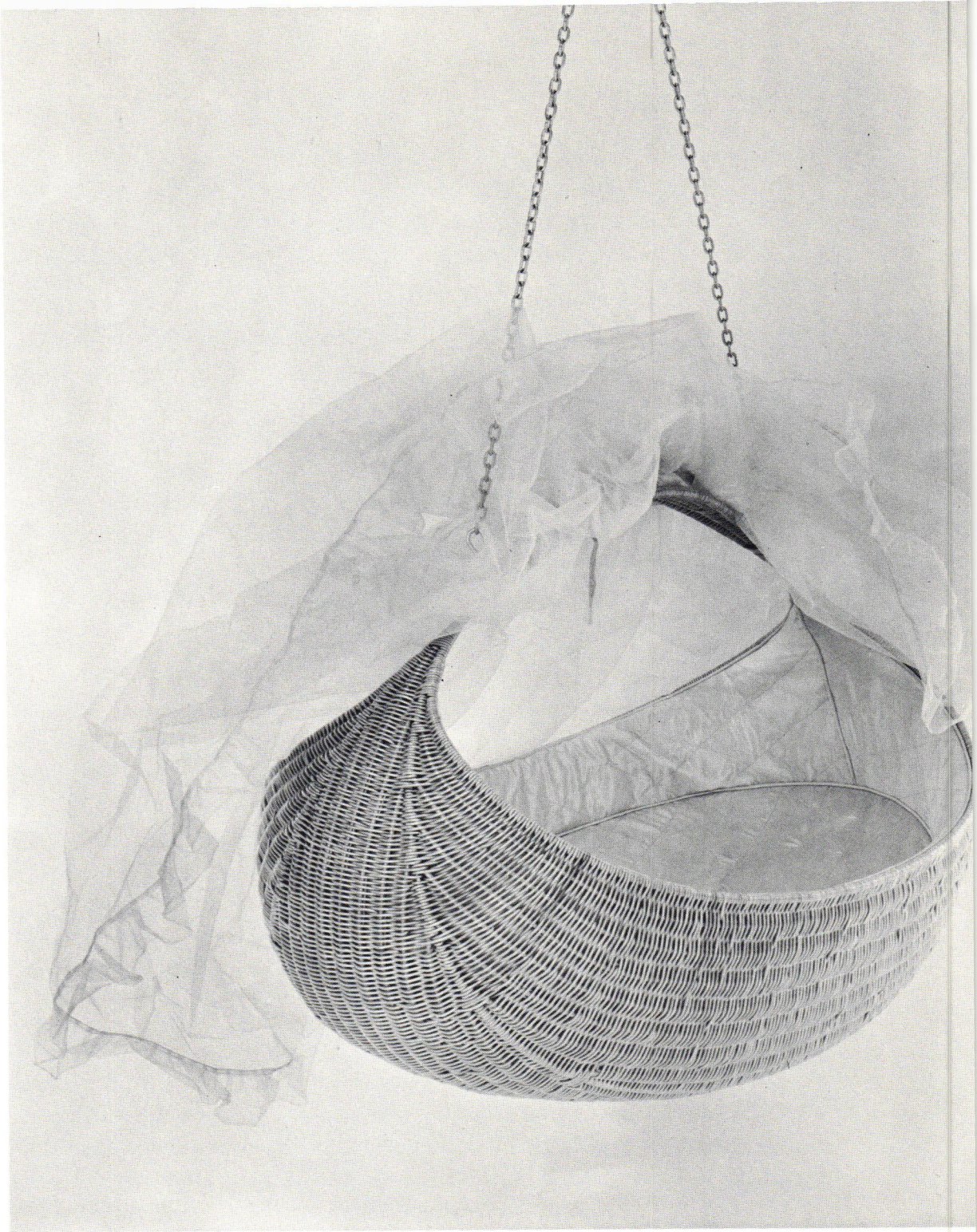
Much of the nursery equipment currently available is not very different from what it was in earlier centuries. The baby cage or going cart, a device to teach children to walk, was known in the Middle Ages. It is more commonly called a "walker" today, but the principle of providing a support on wheels or casters, while permitting the arms to be free, is basically the same. The cradle is, no doubt, of more ancient origin. An early example is the simple box on rockers, illustrated in medieval manuscripts. Later, in the fifteenth century the cradle was raised on posts for the convenience of mothers and nurses. Small chairs for the child's use and high chairs for feeding were known in the sixteenth century. Cribs, playpens, storage units and baby baths are products of the nineteenth century and differ today only in style and, in some instances, improved mechanical features. Manufacturers seem content to offer a few sentimental details as a substitute for new solutions.

The problem in our own country is not lack of talent. We have many versatile designers, whose abilities are well suited for this area of design. What appears to be lacking is an established market for good products through the indifference of manufacturers and an uninformed public. Children need an area of their own, where they can engage in active and creative play. With the restricted space available in apartments and small homes, it is very often the bedroom, yet this room is usually filled with furniture ill suited for the purpose. A minimum of furniture is needed, if it is designed to serve a variety of uses. Few families can afford the sequence from bassinet, crib, child's bed to adult bed offered on the market. A more practical solution would be a bed that can expand as the child grows. Storage cupboards are equally inflexible, with miniature units rapidly outgrown by the child.

It is understandable that parents are reluctant to spend more than the minimum for furniture which has limited use and which must be stored or discarded after a short time. Cost is not the only factor when we observe that the amount spent on toys annually in the United States is about two billion dollars, exclusive of sports equipment. This amount is twenty times the annual expenditure for children's furniture. It seems likely that manufacturers, in failing to offer functional solutions, have limited the scope of their market.

Furniture for children must be designed for safety and durability to withstand the active abuse it will receive. Maintenance and ease of handling for the mother, as well as the child, should be considered in the selection of materials, details of design and mechanical features. Versatility, multi-use and ability to function for the growing child are essential.

Most of the furniture included in this issue has been selected with these criteria in mind. Some of the designs suggest another direction, which has not been fully explored. For the young child, furniture can also be elements for creative play, offering a greater challenge for the imagination than the too specific toy that is soon discarded. Both directions offer a challenge to future designers.



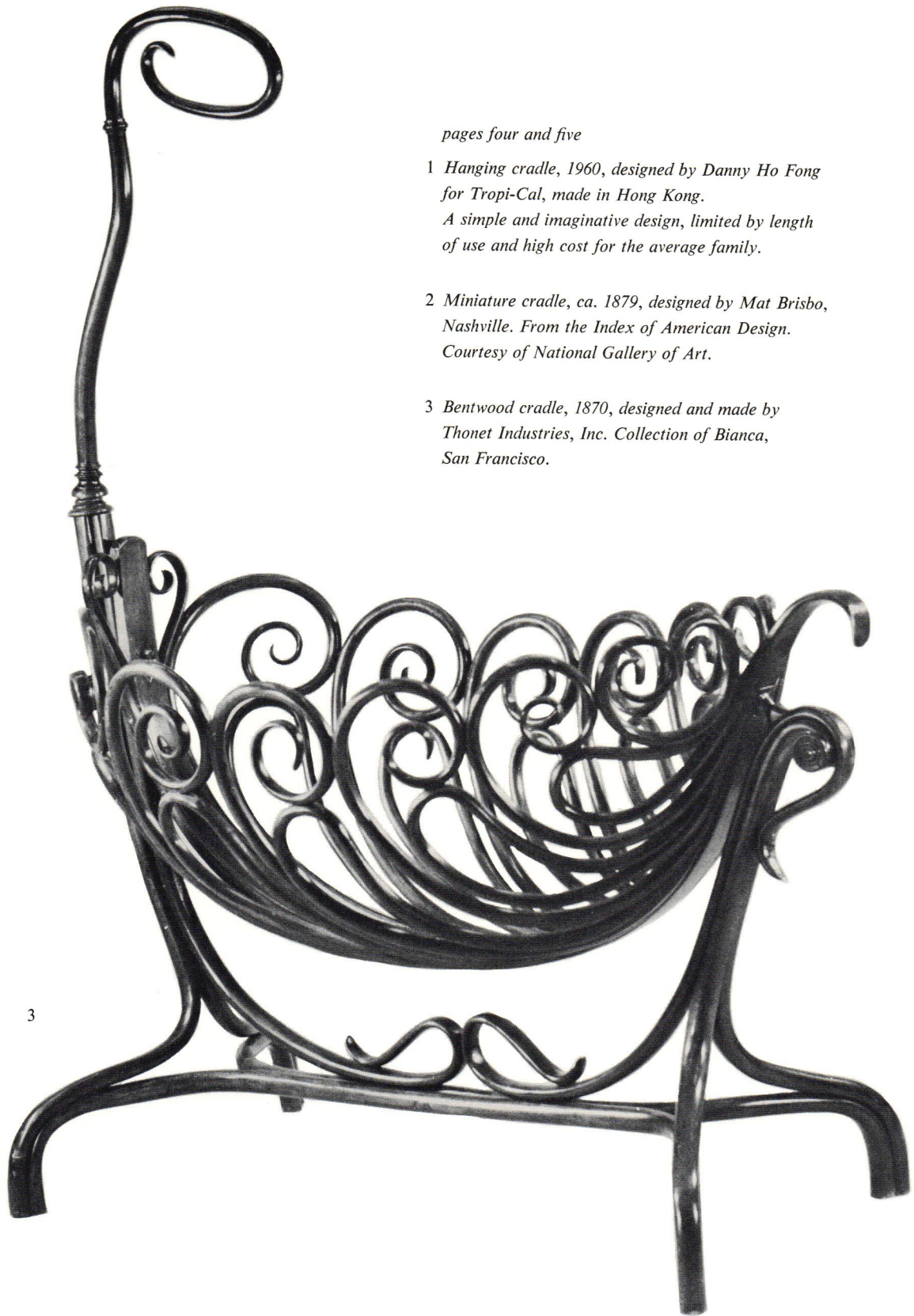
pages four and five

1 *Hanging cradle, 1960, designed by Danny Ho Fong for Tropi-Cal, made in Hong Kong.*

A simple and imaginative design, limited by length of use and high cost for the average family.

2 *Miniature cradle, ca. 1879, designed by Mat Brisbo, Nashville. From the Index of American Design. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art.*

3 *Bentwood cradle, 1870, designed and made by Thonet Industries, Inc. Collection of Bianca, San Francisco.*



pages six and seven

4 Florentine cradle with coat of arms, 16th-17th century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921.

5 Dutch cradle, late 17th century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1906.

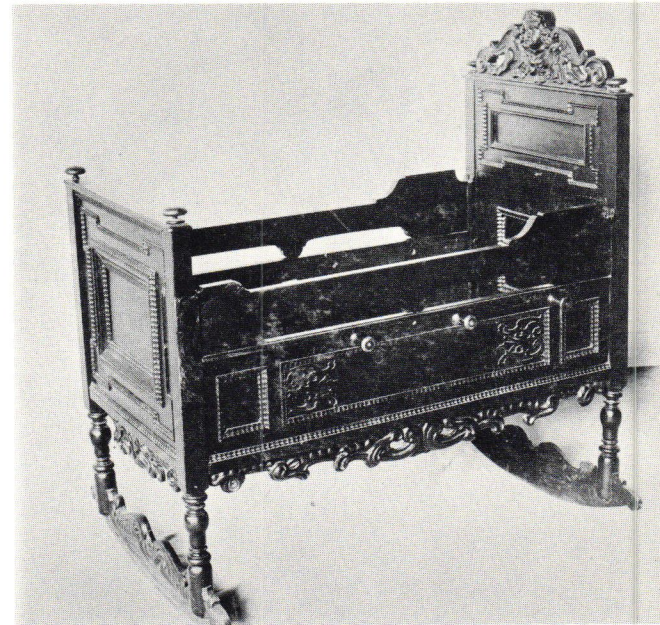
6 Mahogany cradle, ca. 1779 of author Clement Clarke Moore. Courtesy of Museum of the City of New York.

7, 8 Convertible bed with storage unit, 1957, designed by Emil Guhl for Werkgenossenschaft Wohnhilfe, Switzerland. The storage unit provides space for dressing the baby or can be removed from the base to convert it into a full size bed.

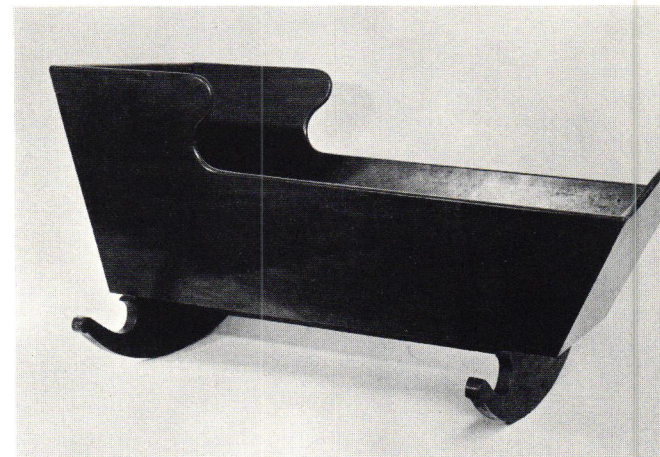
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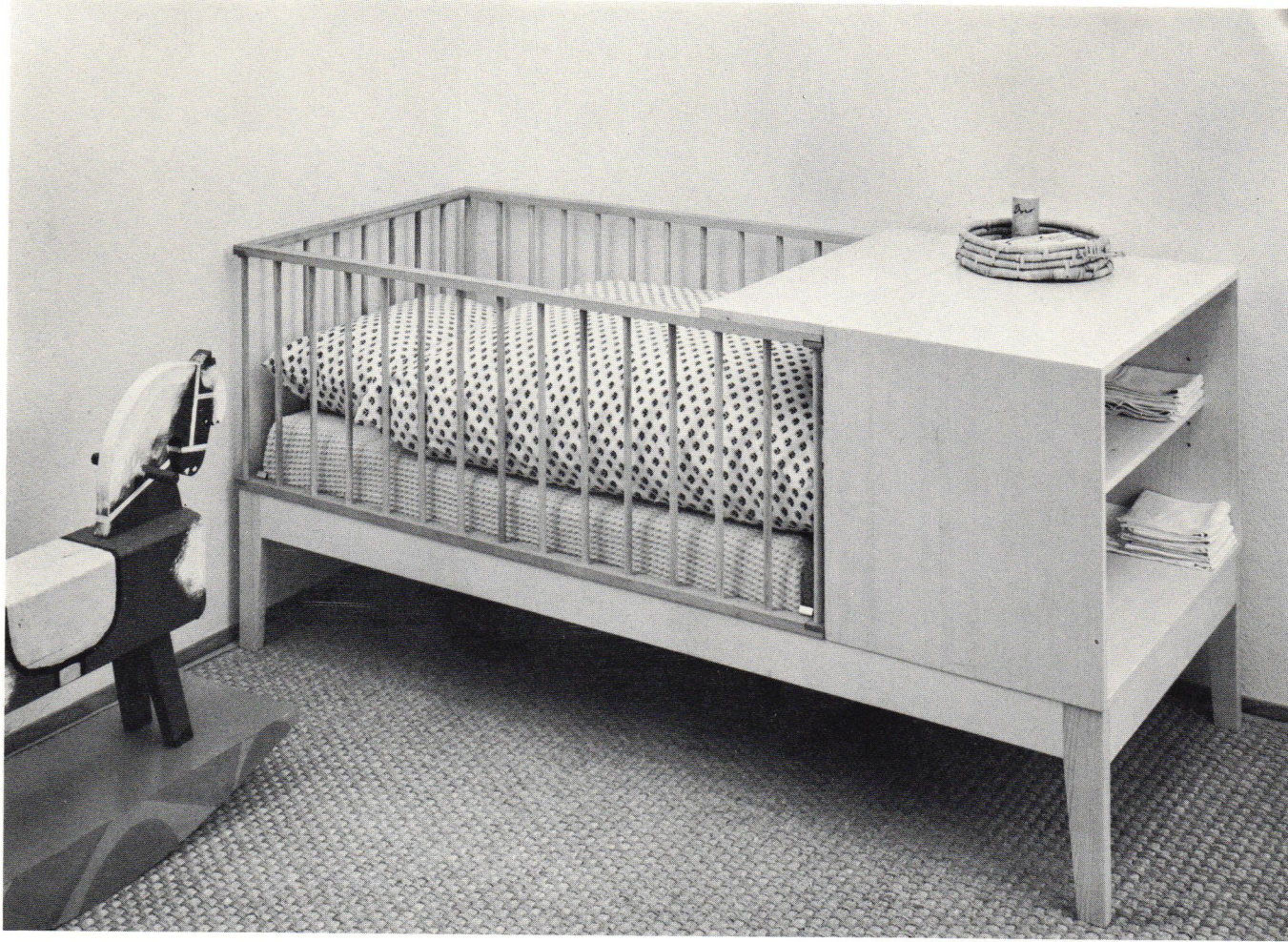
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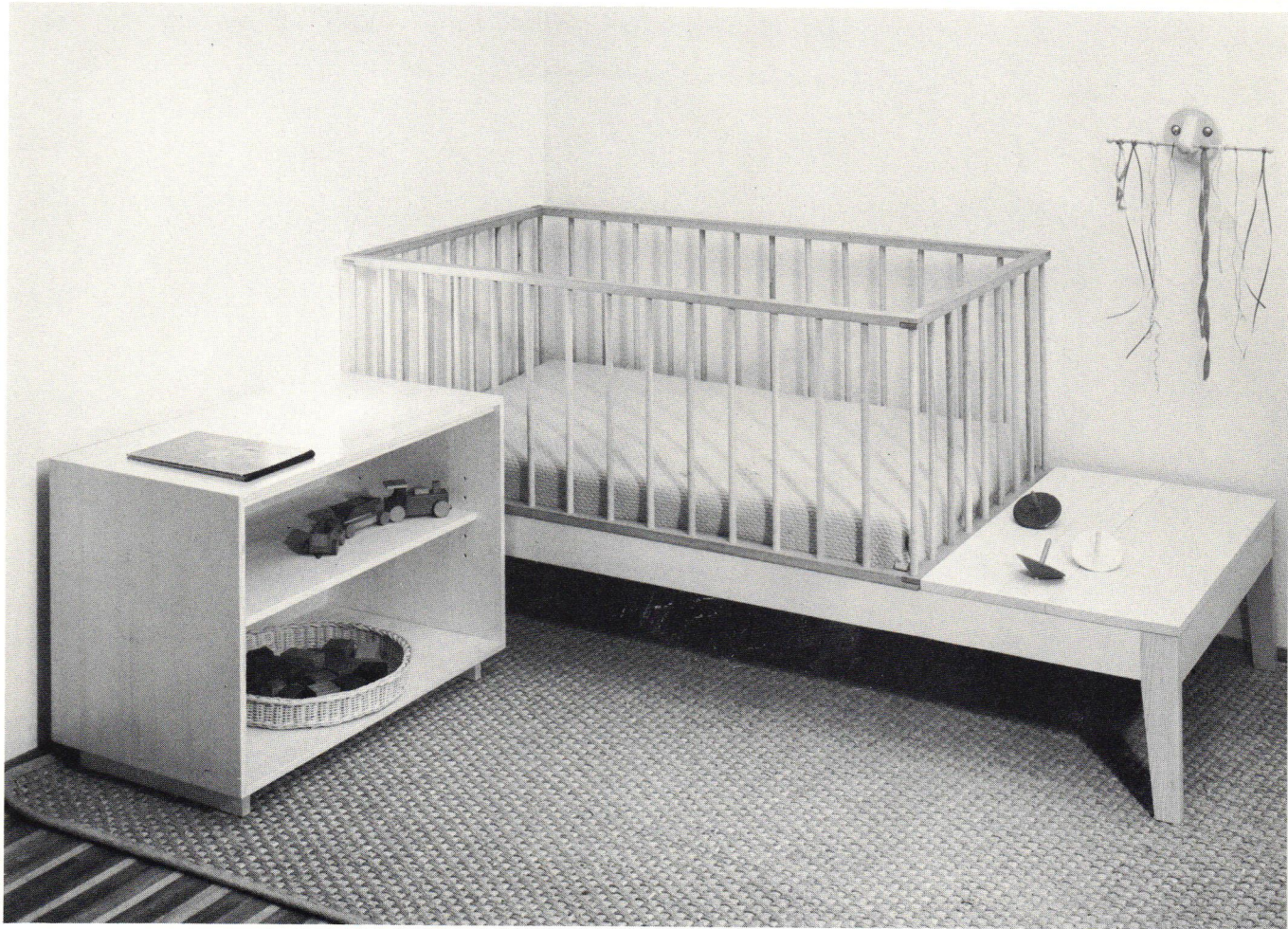
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11

pages eight and nine

9 English high chair of oak, ca. 1600. Courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum.

10 English high chair, style of Charles II, 1660-1685. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1913.

11 Child's high chair, 1955, designed by Nanna and Jørgen Ditzel for Mobelfabriken A/S Kolds Savvaerk, Denmark. Available in teak, oak or beech.

12 Windsor high chair, ca. 1750-1785, New England. Courtesy of Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum.

13 Bentwood high chair, ca. 1870, designed and made by Thonet. Collection of Thonet Industries, Inc., New York.

14 Convertible high chair, 1961, designed by Martyn Rowlands for Ekco Plastics Ltd., Great Britain. Folding arm hooks chair firmly to car seat for travel, with additional stand may be used as low chair.

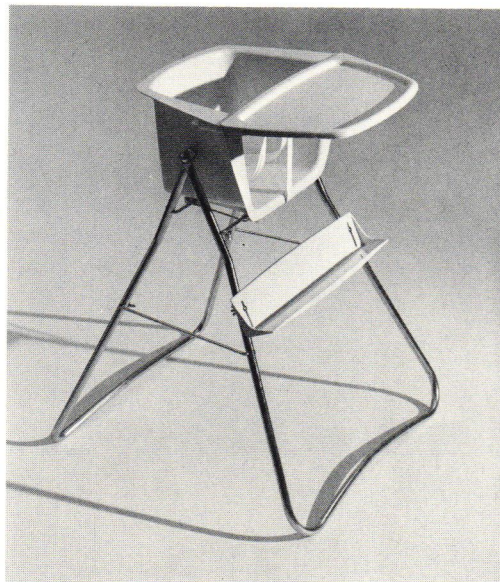
15 Feeding and play table, current model of 1937 design by Babee-Tenda Corp. Adjusts to card table height for general utility purposes.



12



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14



15

pages ten and eleven

16, 17 *Convertible child's chair, 1959, designed by*
18, 19 *Walter Papst for Wilkhahn Sitzmöbel, Western*
Germany. Fiberglass reinforced polyester chair
can be converted to rocker, swing or high chair
with separate components.

20 *Rocking horse, 1959, designed by Walter Papst for*
Wilkhahn Sitzmöbel, Western Germany. Fiberglass
reinforced polyester.

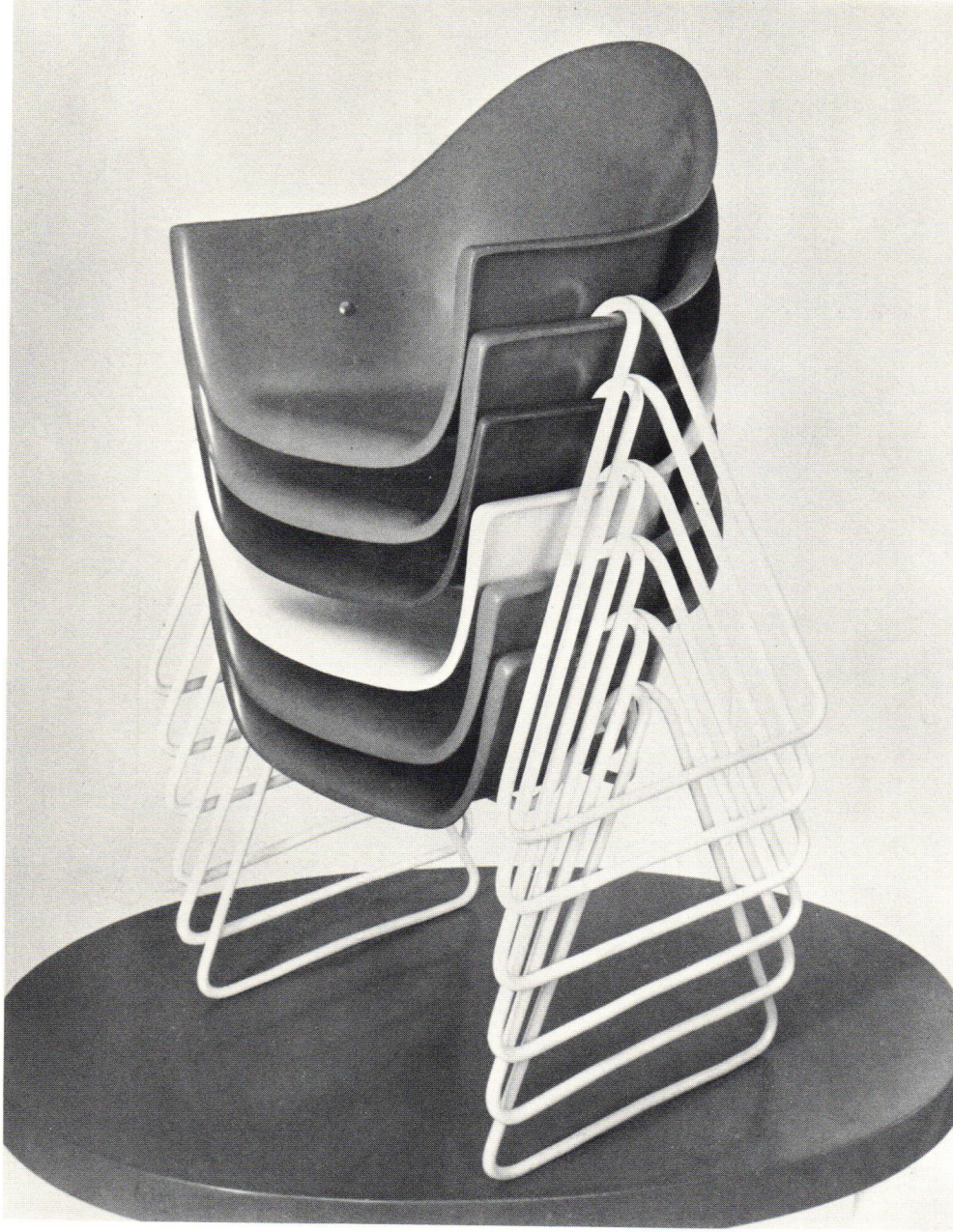
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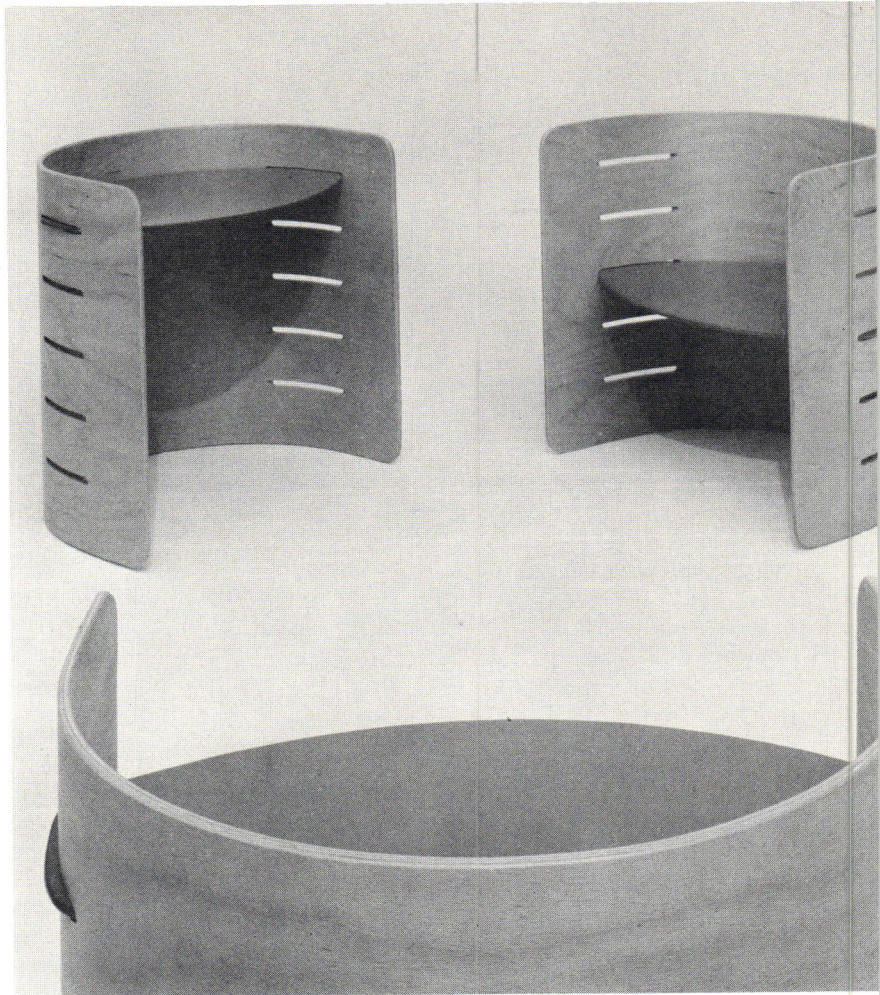
19



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pages twelve and thirteen

21, 22 *Child's chair and play table, 1957, designed by*
23, 24 *Kristian Vedel for Torpen Ørskov & Co., Denmark.*
Adaptable, with interchangeable parts, as a doll's
cradle, rocking boat, tunnel or support for a see-saw.
Natural beech and painted finish. (22 & 23) Courtesy
of House Beautiful Magazine.



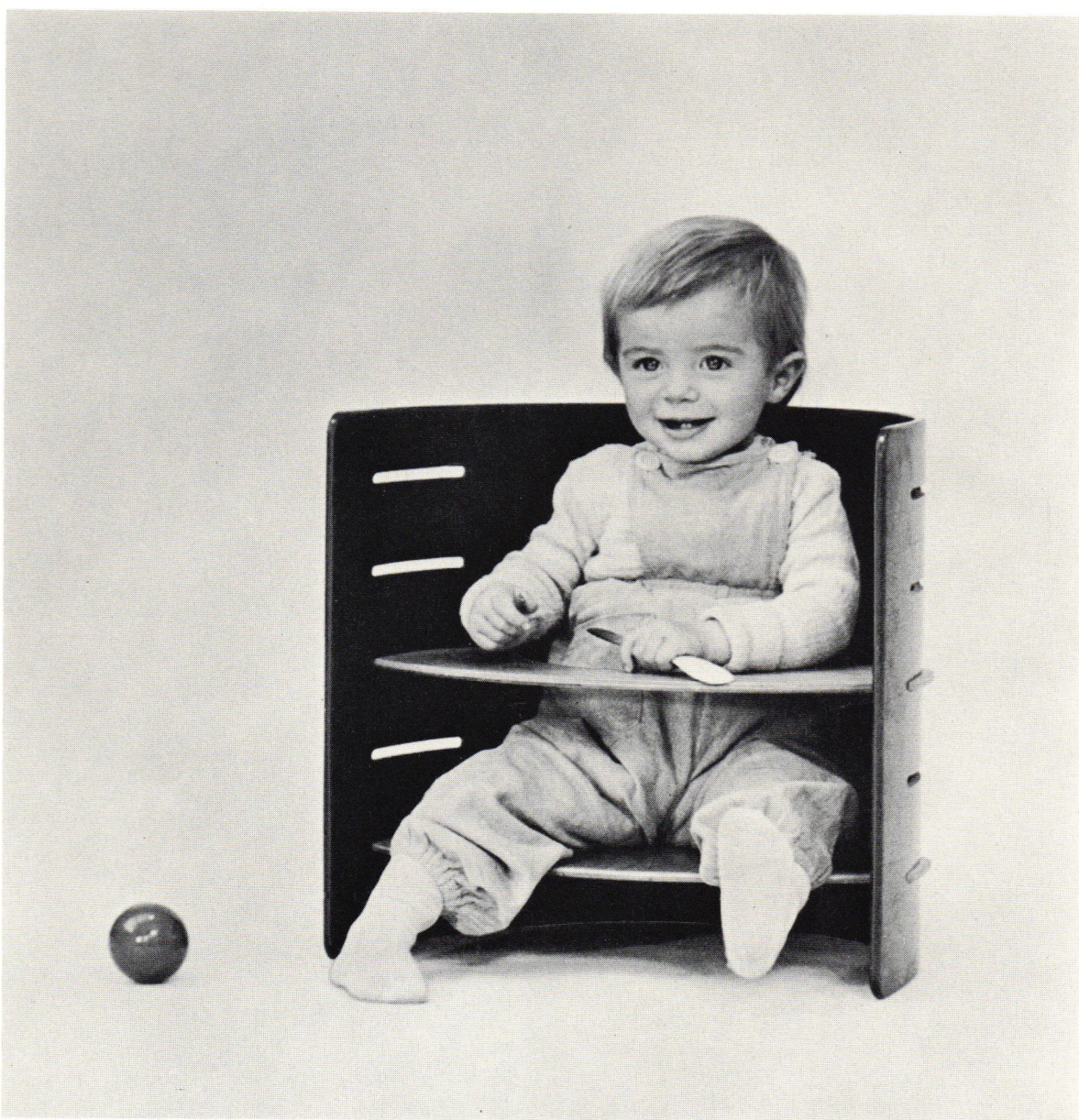
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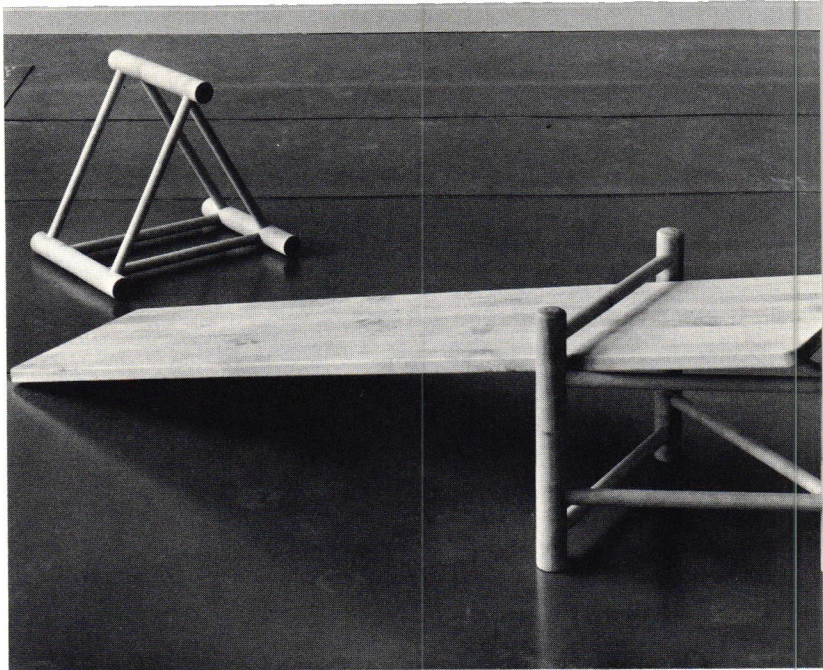
23

Furniture for the young child can offer more than a place to sit, eat or play. In the hands of a creative designer, it will open up new avenues for his imagination. A table may be a chair or a hiding place, a tunnel or a house. With a few simple components, the child has the beginning of a train, a boat or a slide. Well made boxes help him in learning to keep his possessions in order. They may also serve as building blocks, tables, benches or props for creative activities. A number of the designs shown here and on the following pages can be assembled or dismantled by the child at an early age, helping him to develop coordination and an understanding of how things are built.

For the child, play is a means of gaining experience, of learning to cope with the adult world. It is also exercise. The furniture he uses must be suitable for his age, durable and safe for play. Its design will influence his developing taste and awareness of color and form.



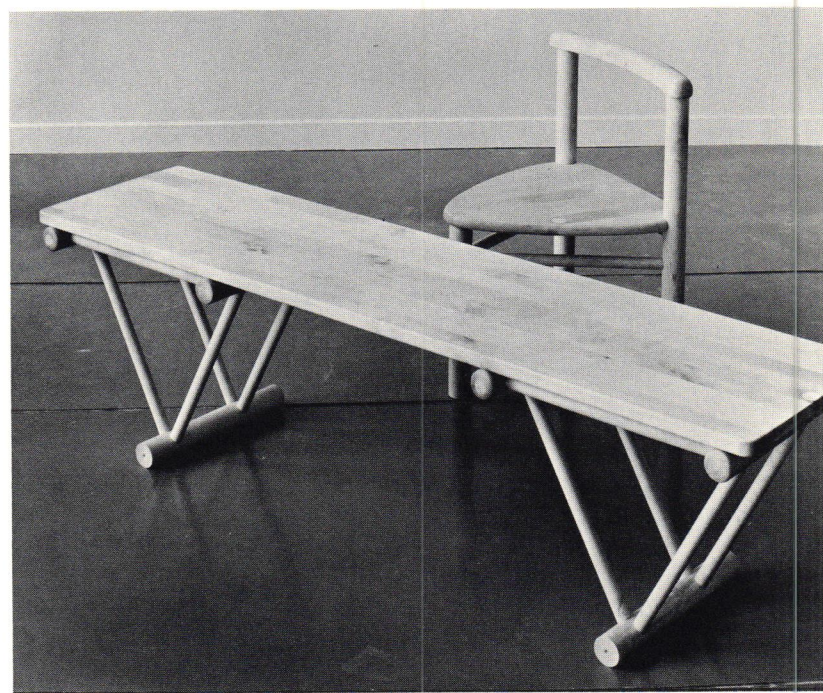
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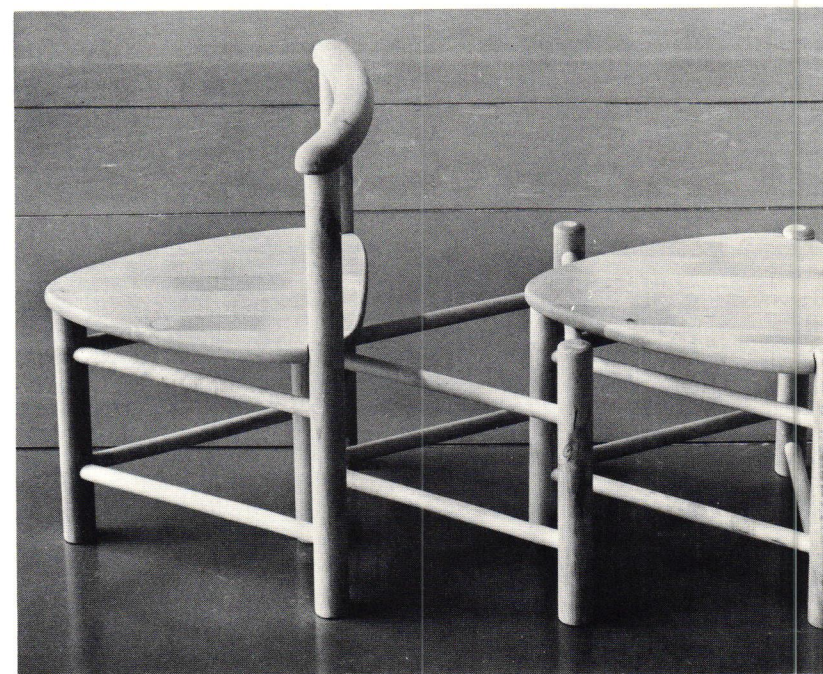
pages fourteen and fifteen

25, 26 "Sound and Round" group of children's furniture,
27, 28 1955, designed by Elis Borg for Sunt Och Runt,
29 Sweden. Versatile and durable components for seating
and storage offer unlimited scope for children's
play. Oiled birch.

26



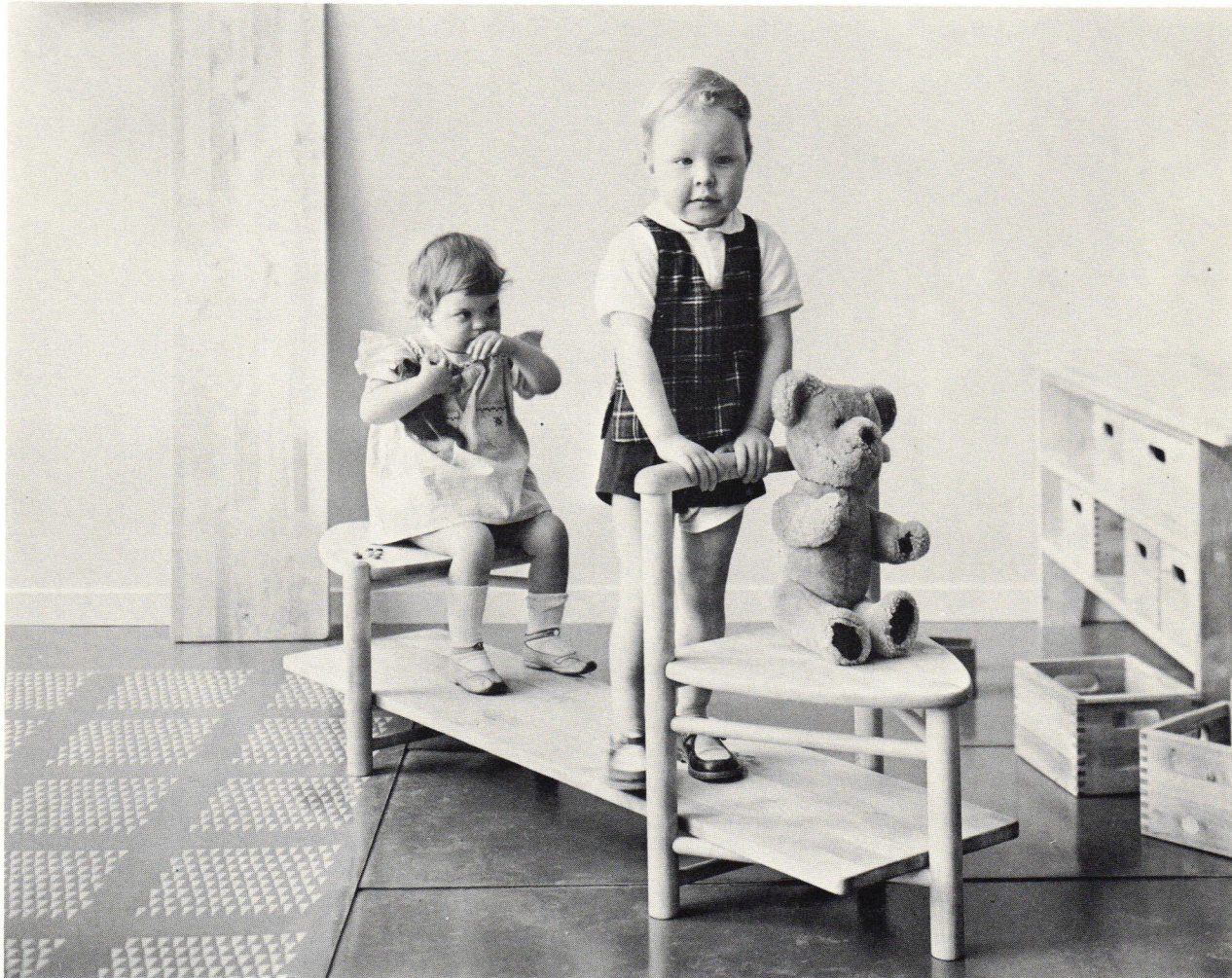
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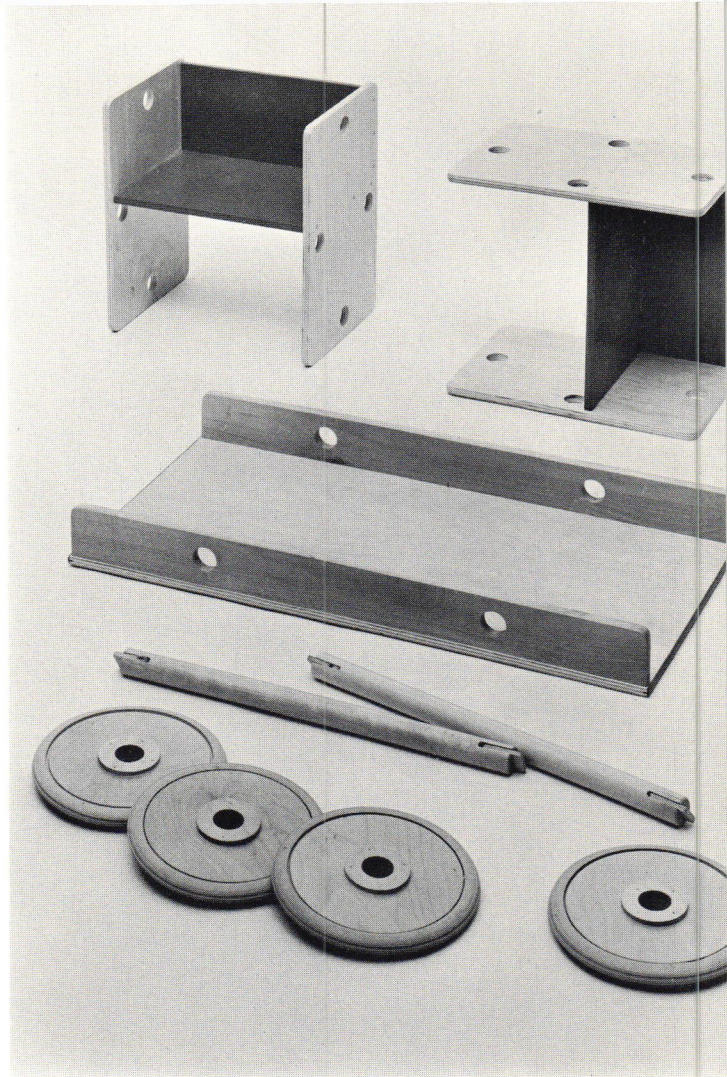
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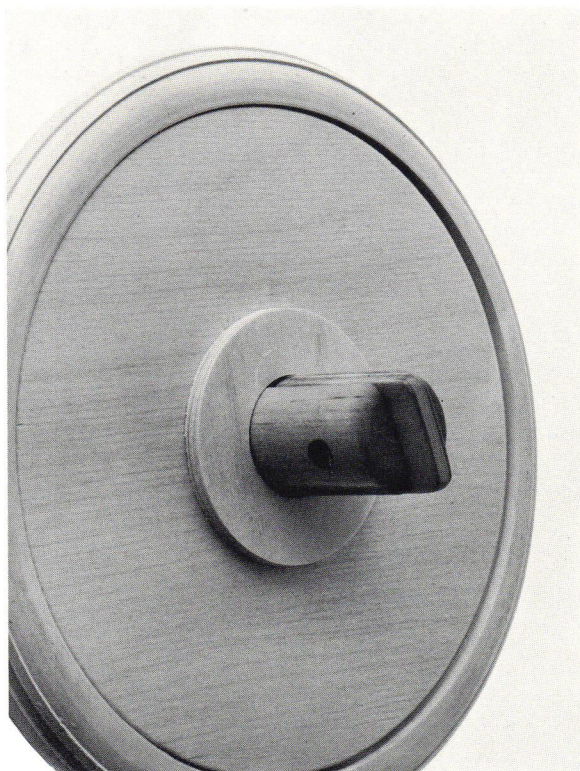
pages sixteen and seventeen

30, 31 *"Fun on Wheels" play furniture, 1959, designed by*
32, 33 *Stephan Gip for Kooperativa Förbundet, Sweden.*

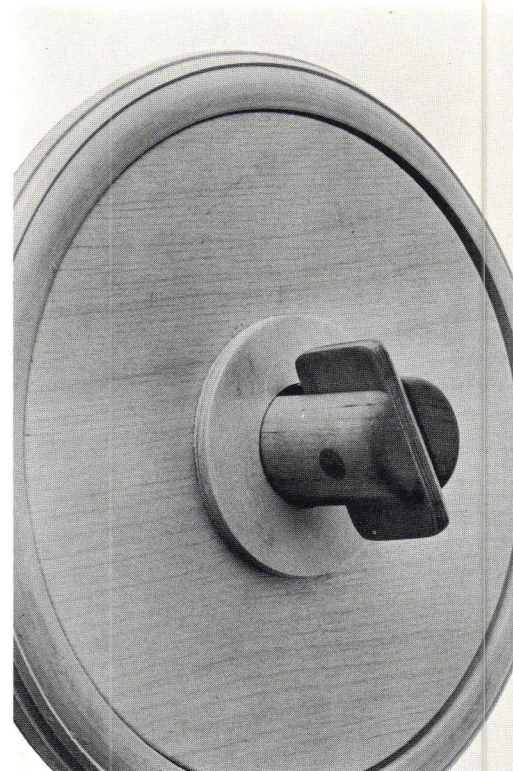
34 *An imaginative design of great versatility to stimulate*
the child's imagination.



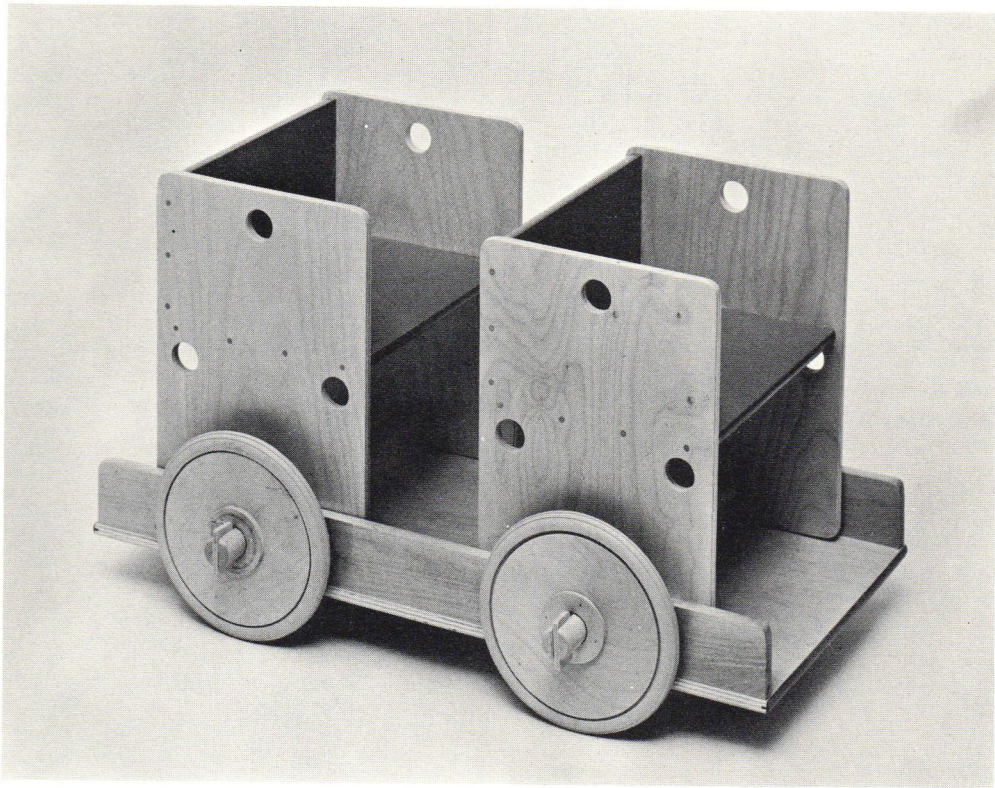
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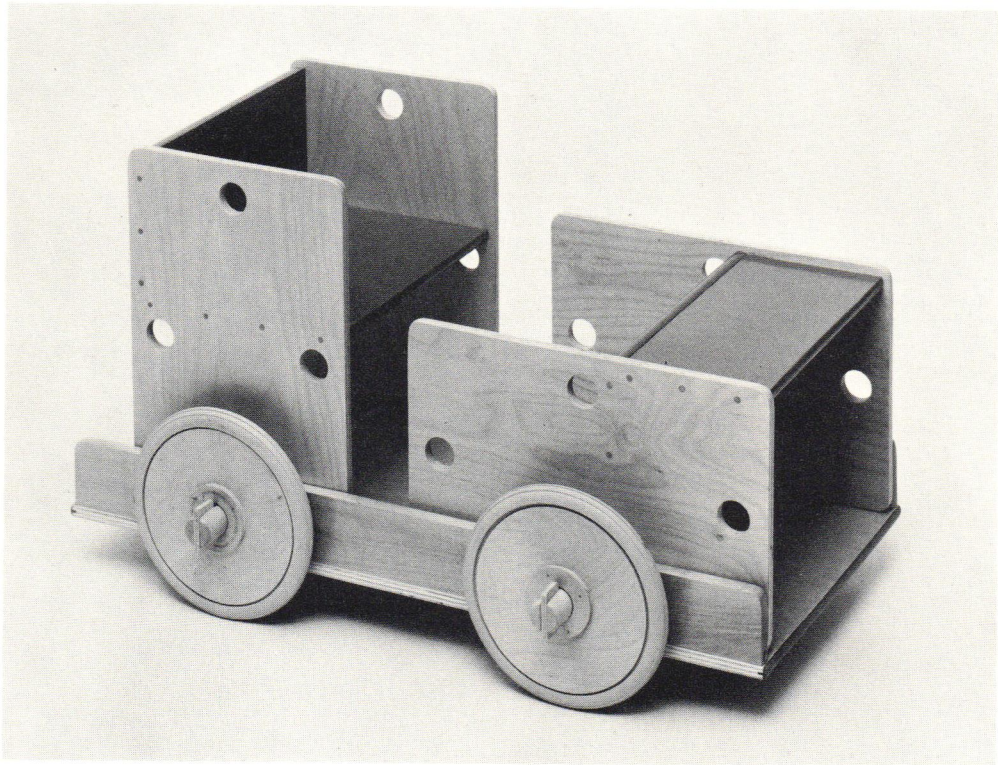
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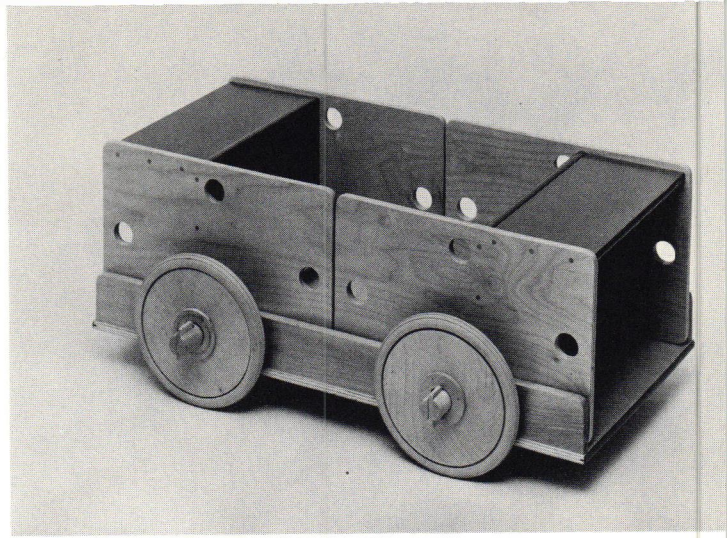
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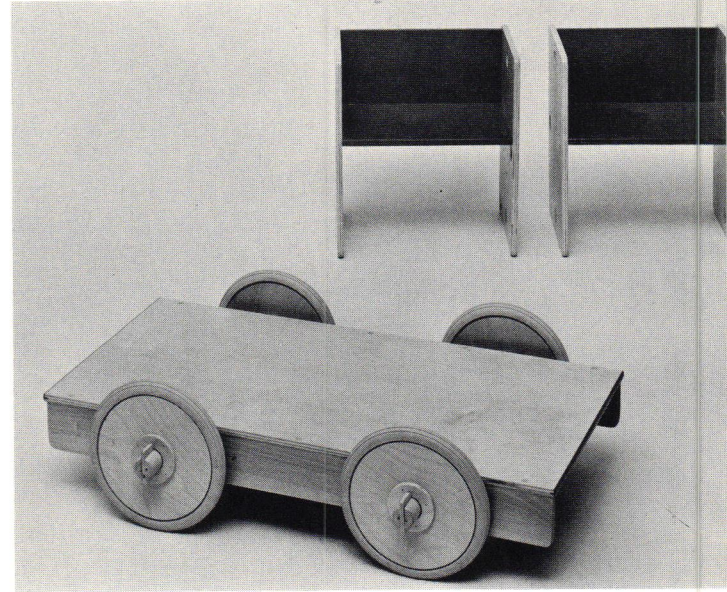
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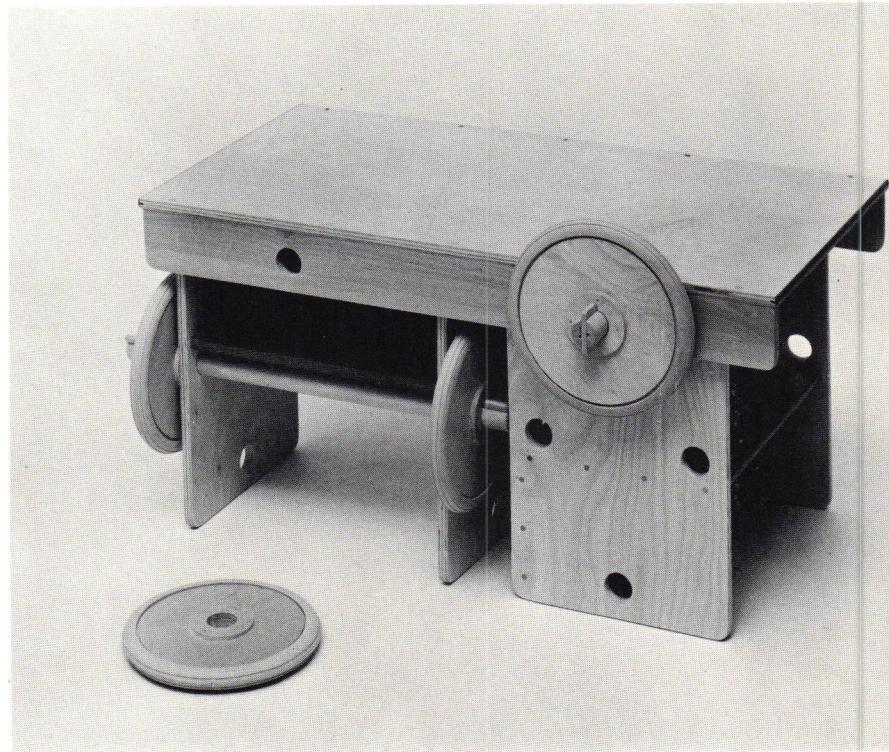
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pages eighteen and nineteen

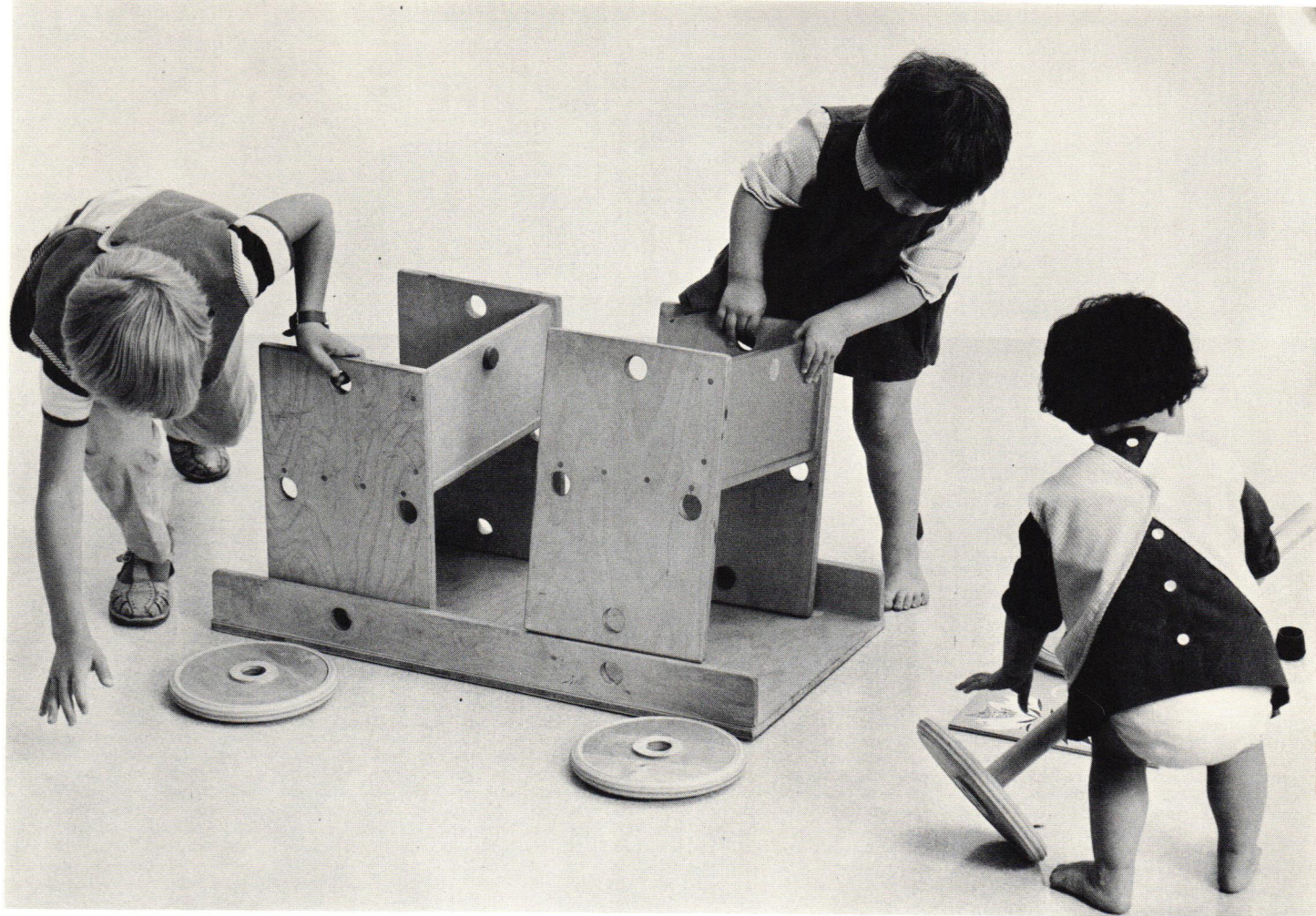
35, 36 "Fun on Wheels" play furniture, 1959, designed by
37, 38 Stephan Gip for Kooperativa Förbundet, Sweden.
39



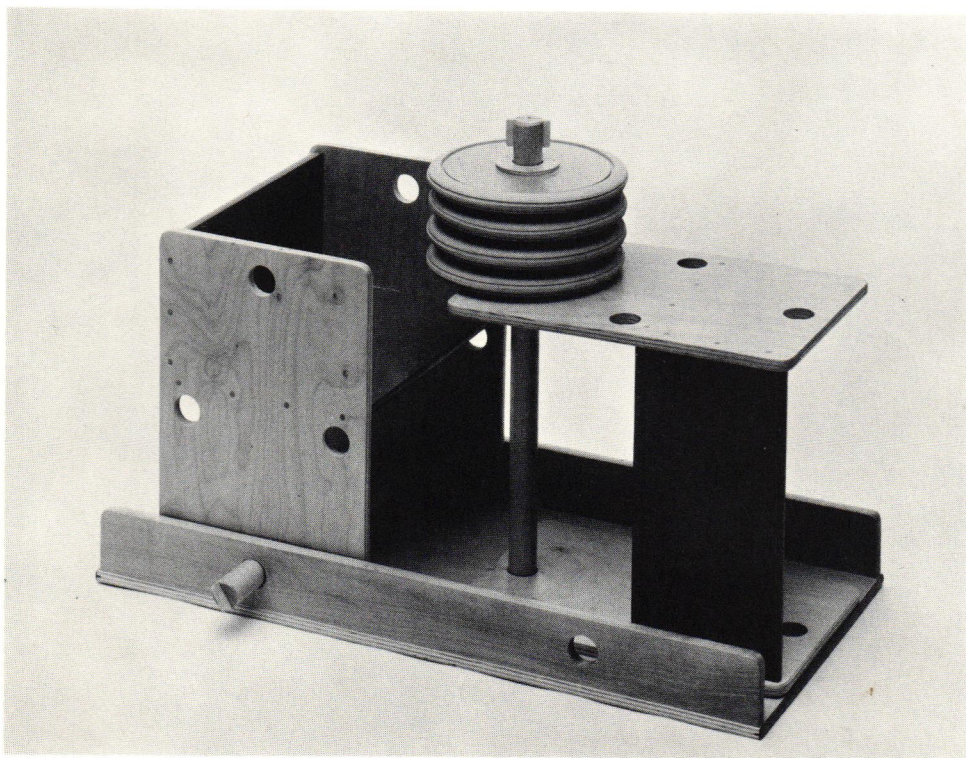
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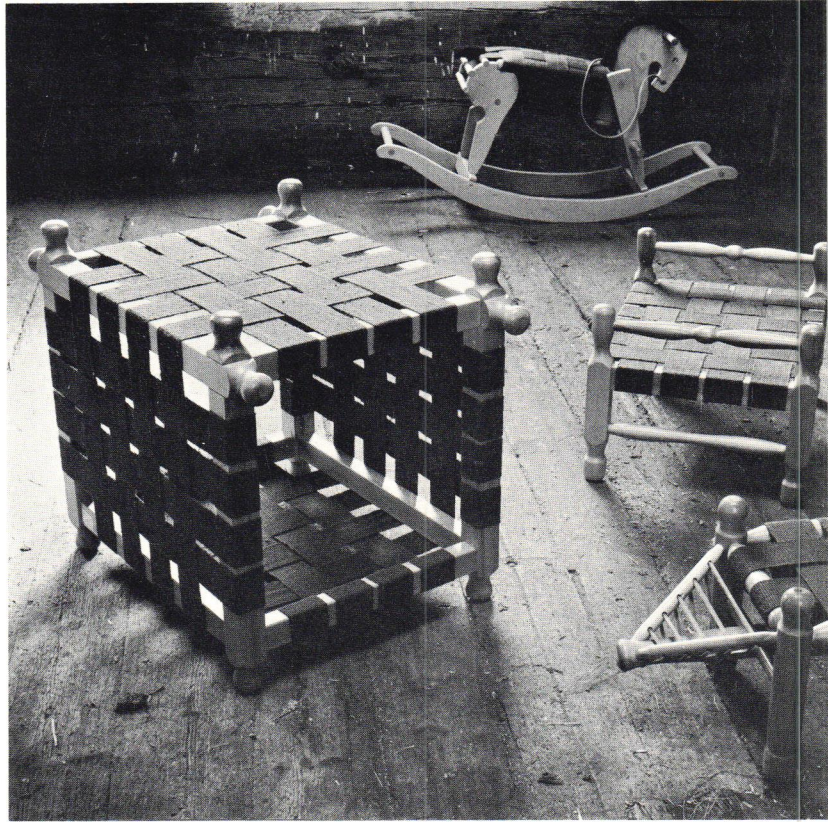
39

pages twenty and twenty-one

40 *Play furniture, 1958, designed by Erik Hoglund for Boda Bruks Ab, Sweden.*

41, 42 *Convertible table-chair, designed by Sven Ellekjaer, Denmark. Oiled teak and oak. Courtesy of House Beautiful Magazine.*

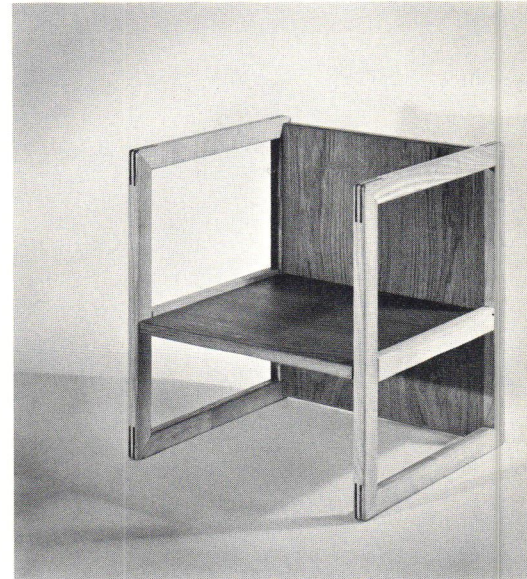
43, 44 *Folding Playscreen designed and made by*
45 *Community Playthings.*



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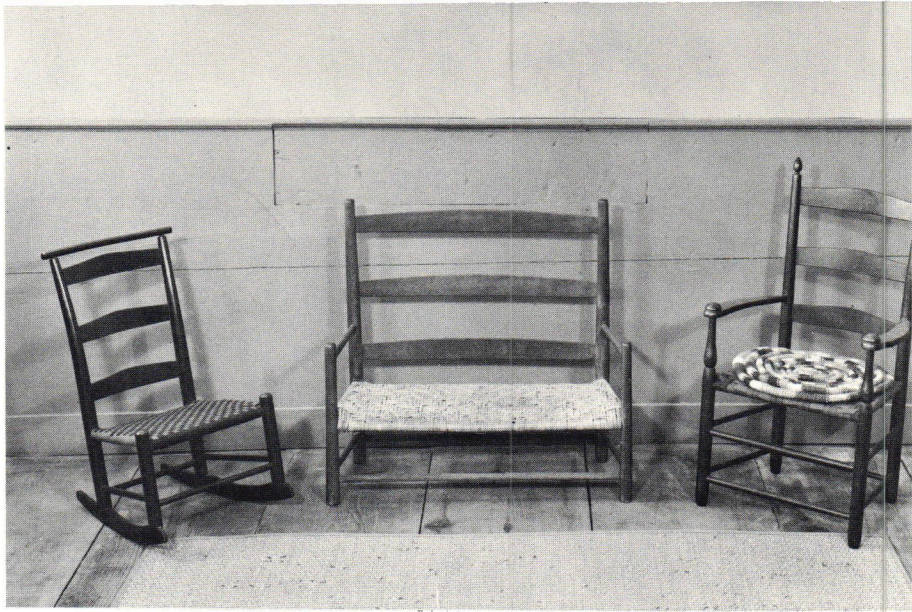
44



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pages twenty-two and twenty-three

- 46 *Child's rocker and chair, ca. 1890, and deacon's bench, 1830-1840, Mt. Lebanon, New York. Courtesy of Shaker Museum. The backs are high in proportion to the seat height to accommodate the longer torso of the child.*



- 47 *Rocking chairs, 1890-1900, Mt. Lebanon, New York. Courtesy of Shaker Museum. Chair sizes as designated by Mt. Lebanon Shakers, ranged from 0 to 7. Numbers 0, 1 and 6 are shown.*

- 48 *Rocker and side chairs, ca. 1850, Canterbury, New Hampshire. Courtesy of Shaker Museum. Adapted to size of child.*

- 49 *Child's table of maple and steel, designed by Isamu Noguchi and chairs of plastic finished steel wire, 1959, designed by Harry Bertoia for Knoll Associates.*

- 50 *Children's bentwood chairs, 1947, designed and made by Thonet Industries, Inc. Sturdy chairs of molded plywood available in sizes for each age group.*





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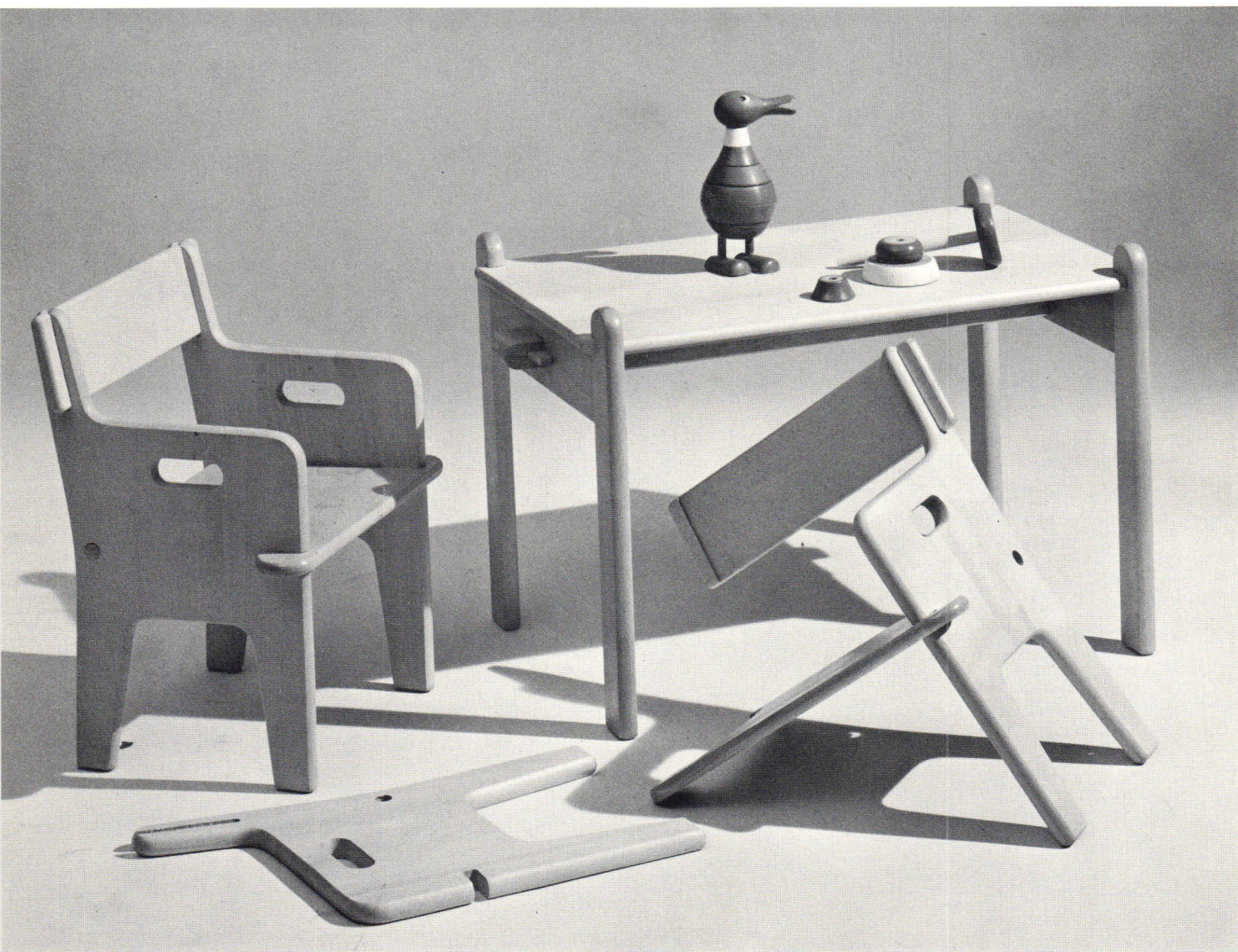
pages twenty-four and twenty-five

- 51 *Folding chair of oak and canvas, 1961, designed by Mogens Koch for Interni Møbler, Denmark.*
- 52 *Table and chairs, 1943, designed by Hans Wegner for F.D.B. Møbler, Denmark. Natural beech.*
- 53 *Modular tables and chairs, designed by Alvar Aalto for Artek oy ab, Finland. Natural birch with linoleum tops and seats.*
- 54 *Table, chair and stool, 1961, designed by Stephan Gip for Ab Skrivit, Sweden. Durable furniture for home or school.*



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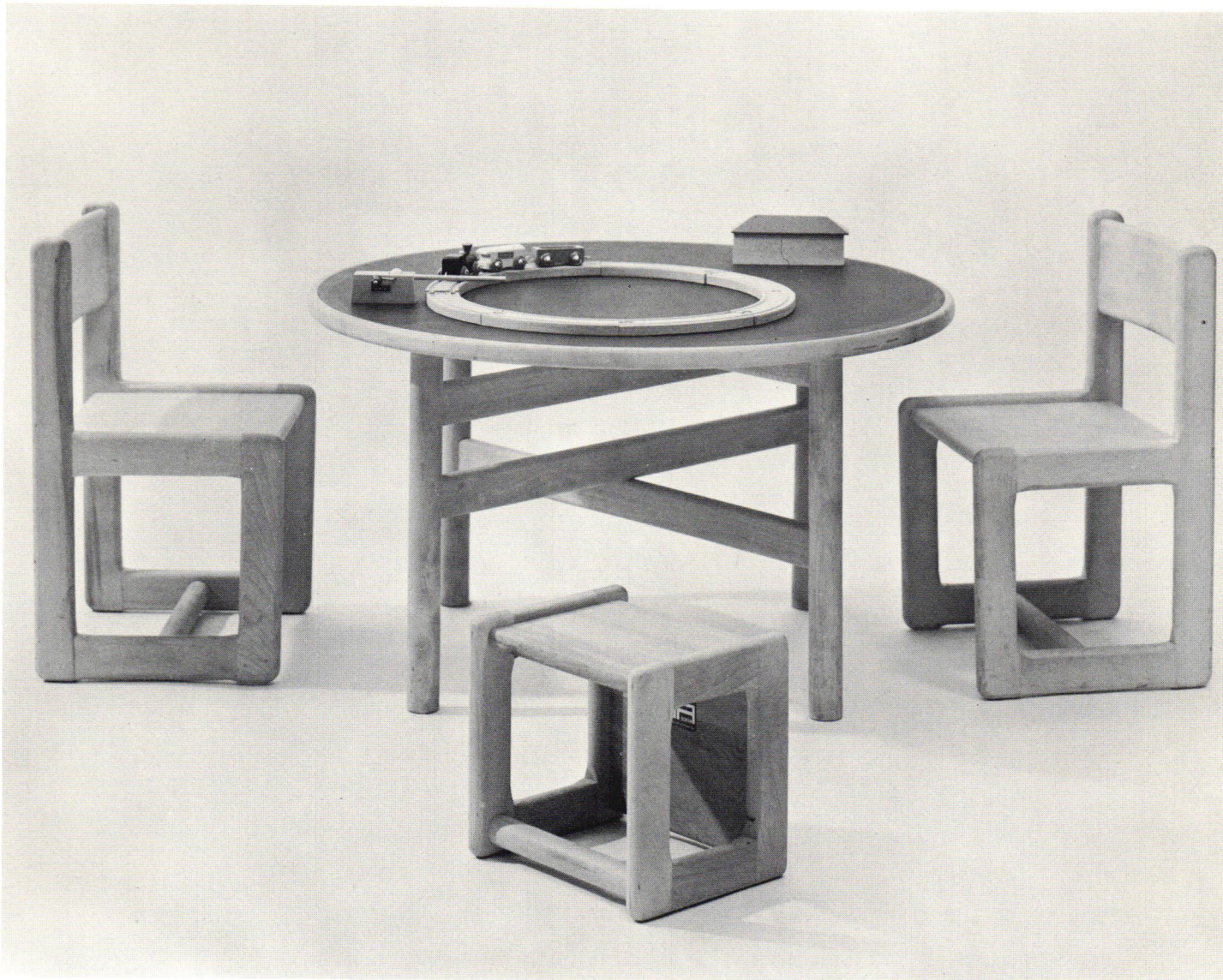
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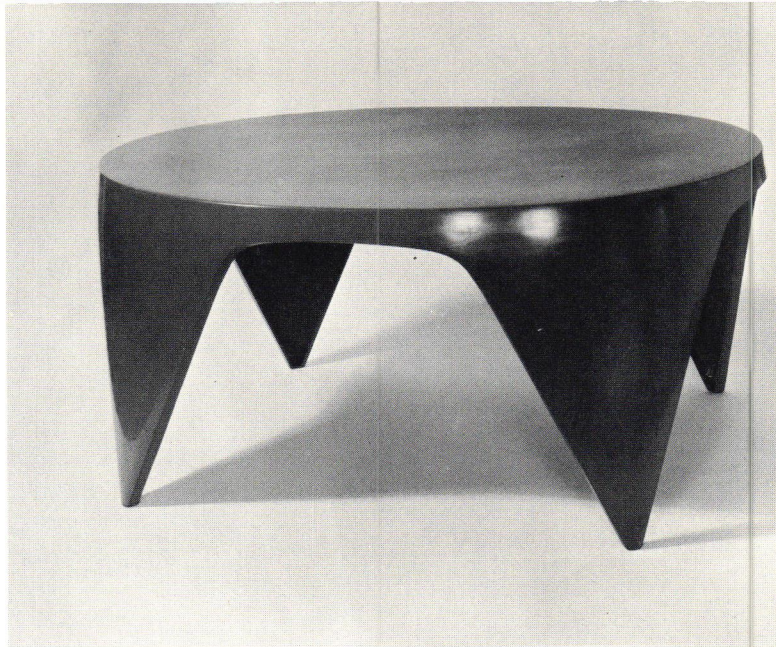


pages twenty-six and twenty-seven

55 *Oval table, 1959, designed by Walter Papst for Wilkhahn Sitzmöbel, Western Germany. Fiberglass reinforced polyester, 35½" x 24" x 18½".*

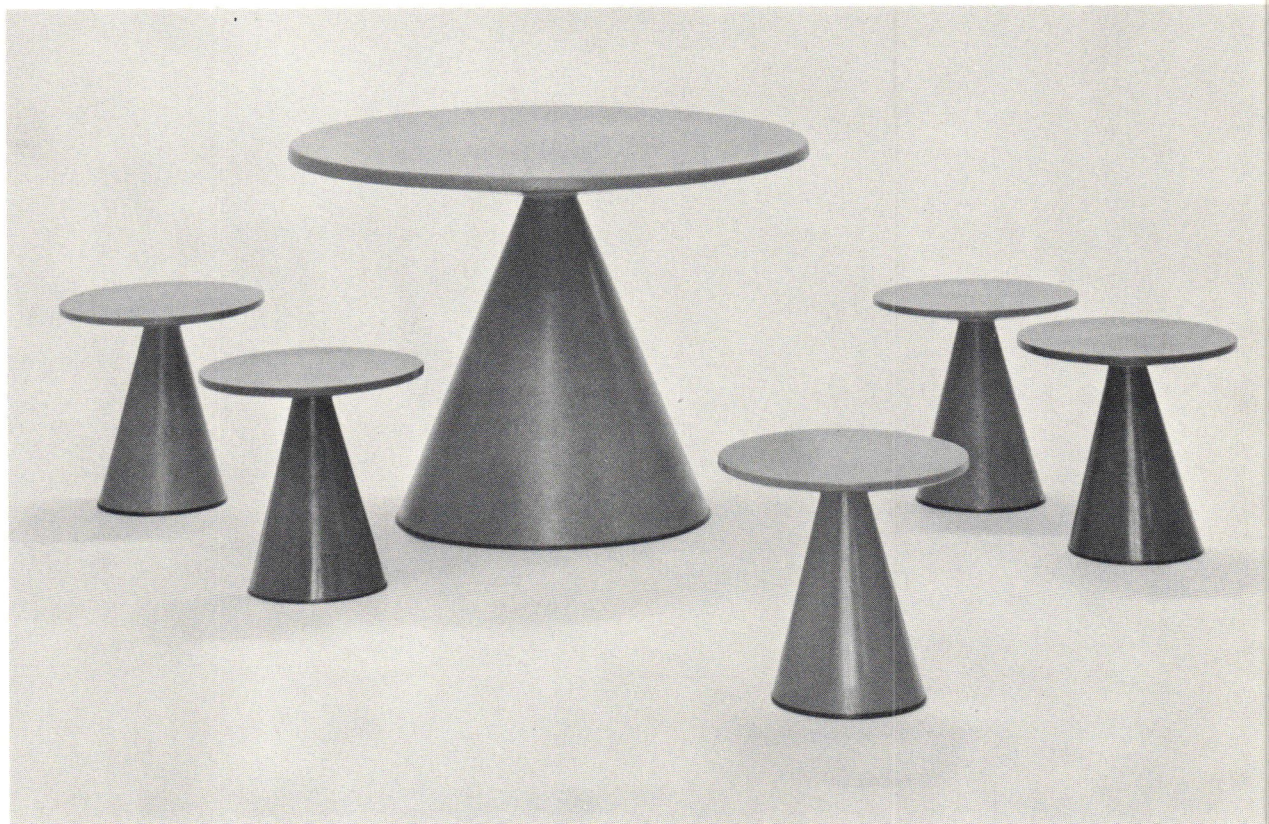
56 *Table and stools, 1959, designed by Richard Thern for Wilkhahn Sitzmöbel, Western Germany. Fiberglass reinforced polyester.*

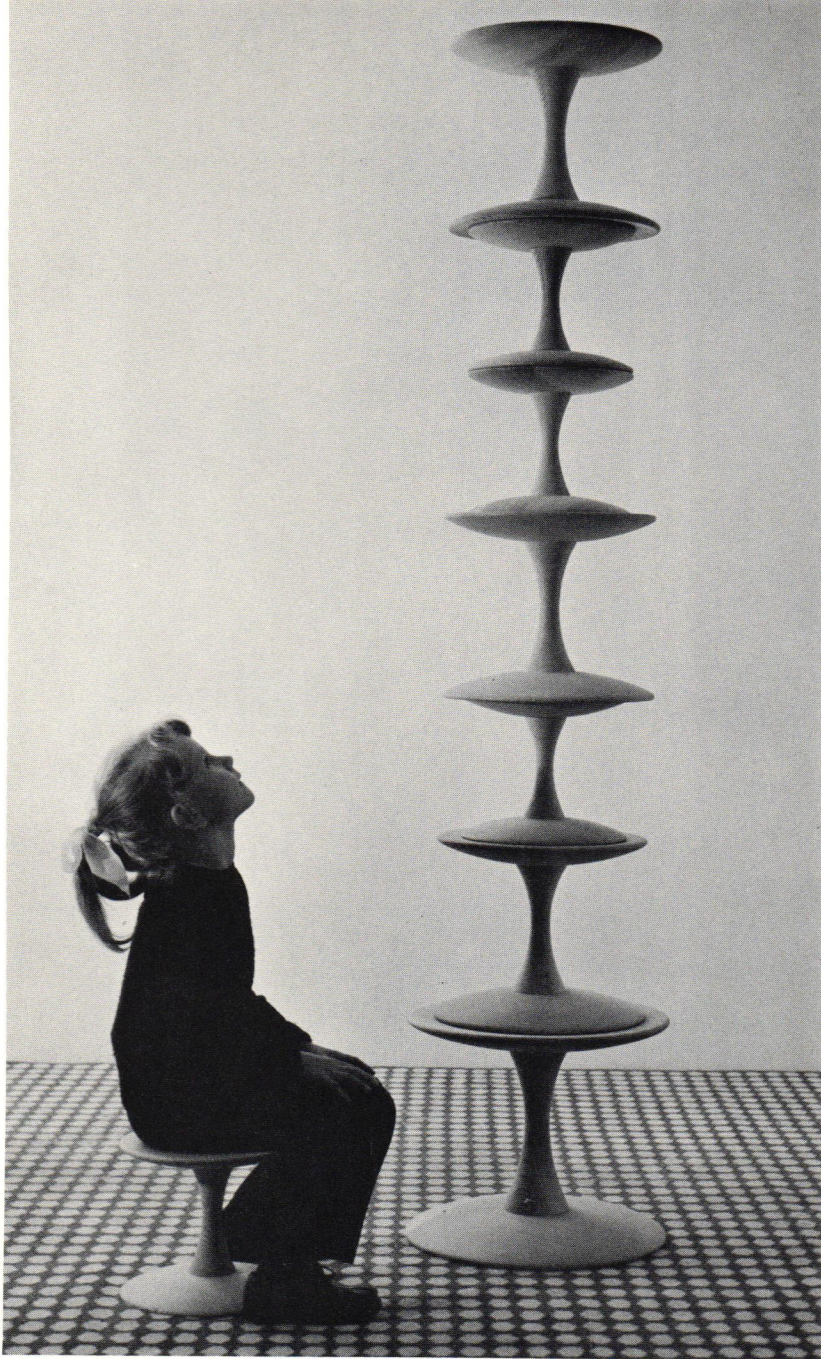
57 *Child's stools and tables of pine, 1962, designed*
58 *by Nanna Ditzel for Møbelfabriken A/S Kolds*
59 *Savvaerk.*



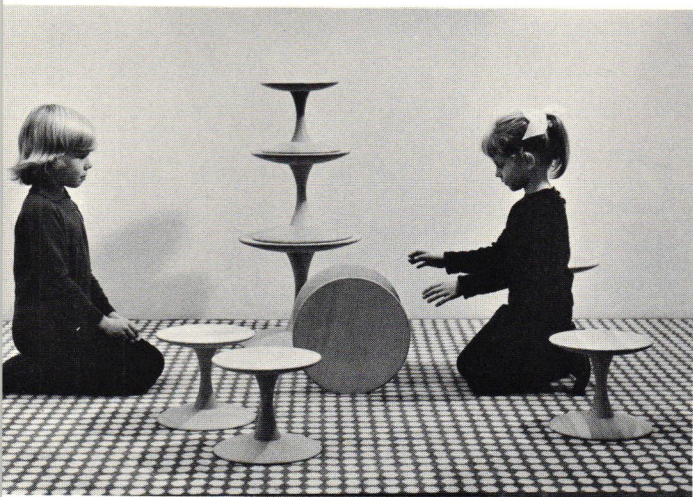
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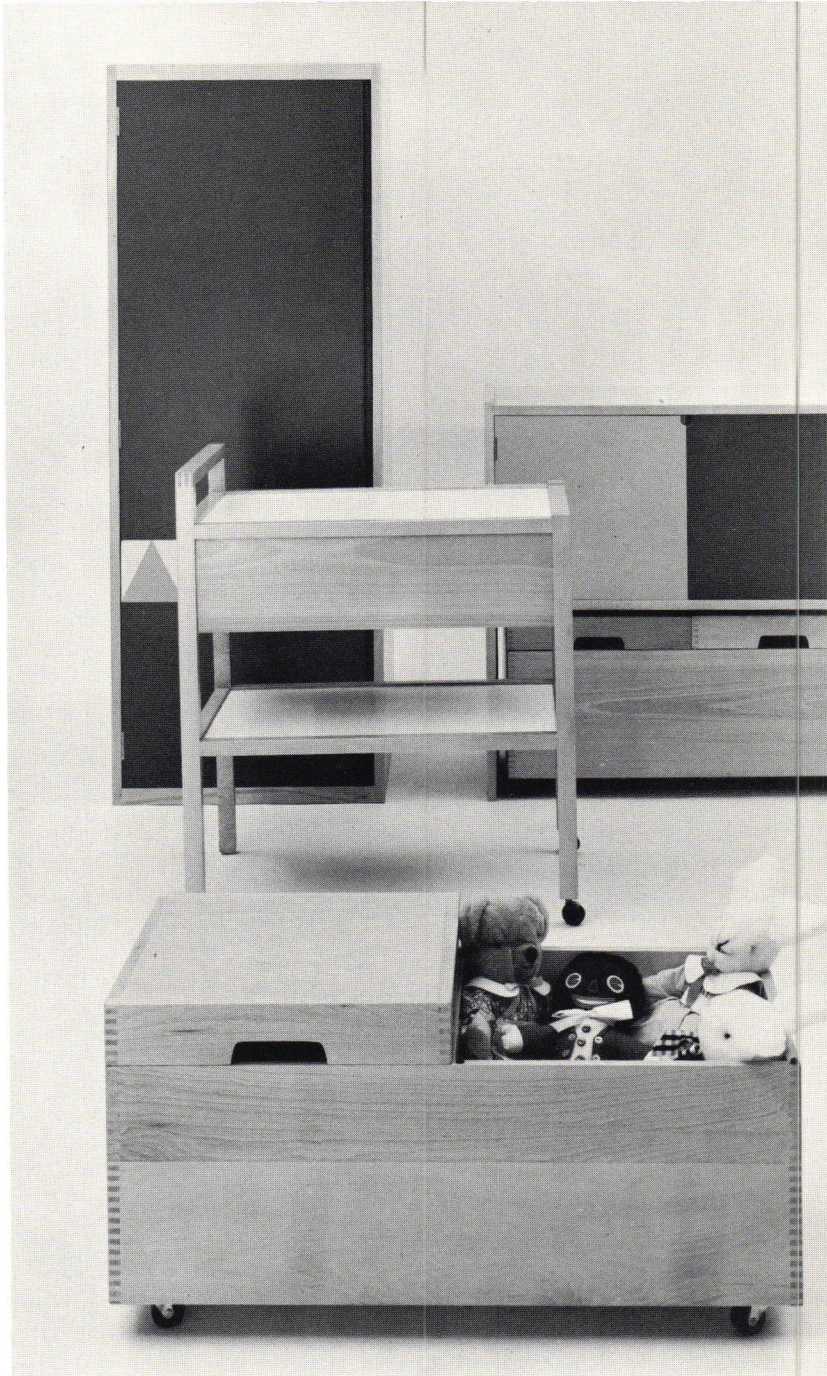
pages twenty-eight and twenty-nine

60 Utility table and nursery storage, designed by students of the LCC Technical College, Great Britain.

61 Nursery cabinet for clothes hanging, 1959, designed by Ilmari Tapiovaara for Heal and Son Ltd., Great Britain. Natural beech and painted finish, 43½" x 24" x 19".

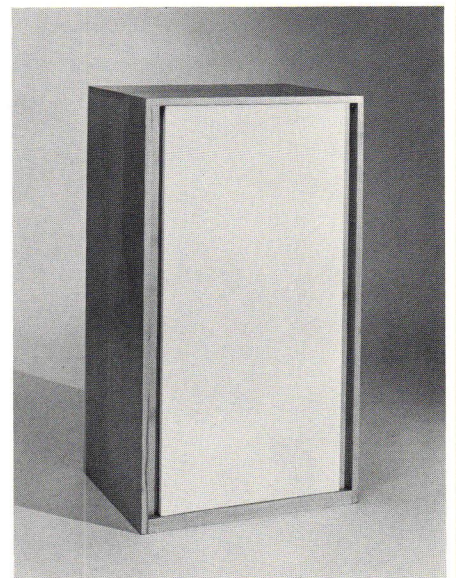
62, 63 Storage unit with table and chairs, designed by Niels M. Kofoed, Denmark. Courtesy of House Beautiful Magazine. A compact unit for play and storage where space is limited.

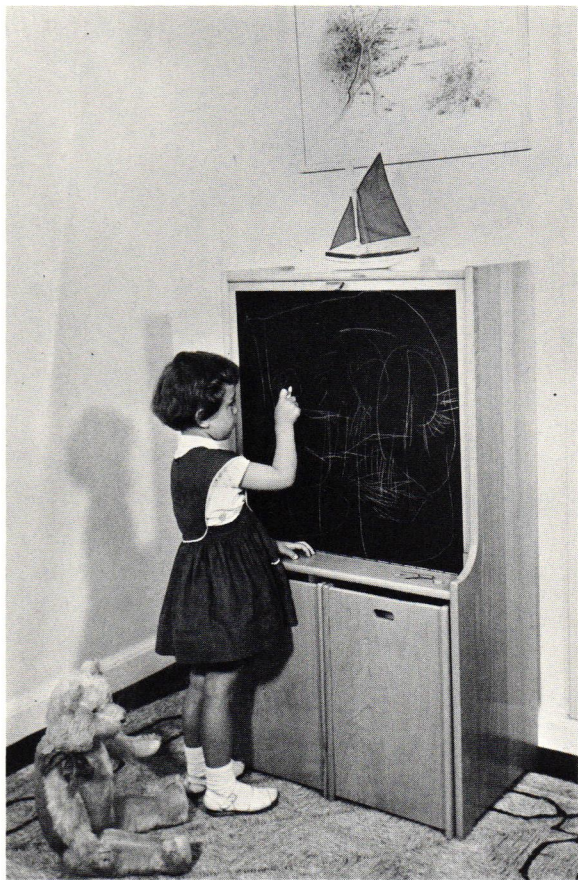
64 Work table and toy storage, 1960, designed by Evy Westerberg Levander for Gösta Westerberg Möbel Ab, Sweden. Storage boxes on casters.



60

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62



63



64

pages thirty and thirty-one

65 *Adjustable child's desk, designed by Pierre Gautier-Delaye, France.*

66 *Work table and toy storage, designed by Aino Aalto for Artek oy ab, Finland. Natural birch and painted finish, toy drawers on casters.*

67 *Adjustable storage units, 1949, designed by Nissen Strinning for Strinning Design ab, Sweden. An extensive line of wall hung storage components in natural woods and painted finishes.*

68 *Flexible storage units, 1961, designed by Stephan Gip for Ab Skrivit, Sweden. Sturdy units of oiled beech available in several combinations for home or school use.*

69 *Clothes hanging storage, designed and made by Community Playthings.*



65



66



67

68



69

pages thirty-two and thirty-three

70 *Children's beds and storage, 1959, designed by Ilmari Tapiovaara for Heal & Son Ltd., Great Britain. Natural beech and painted finish.*

71 *Storage boxes of pine, designed by Ib Hylander, Denmark. Courtesy of House Beautiful Magazine. Versatile units which can be used for storage, seating or a variety of purposes for the growing child.*

72 *"Kubik" group of children's furniture, 1960, designed by Wilfried Köhneman for Averskogs Möbelfabrik, Sweden. Beds may be assembled in double deck form. Solid birch and painted plywood.*

70





pages thirty-four and thirty-five

73 *Child's room with furniture of the 18th century.
Courtesy of Henry Francis du Pont
Winterthur Museum.*

74 *Double deck beds, table and storage, designed
by Pirkko Stenros for Artek oy ab, Finland.*

75 *Child's field bed, ca. 1800-1840, New England.
Courtesy of Henry Francis du Pont
Winterthur Museum.*

76 *Child's bed of solid pine, 1960, designed by Stephan
Gip for Nordiska Kompaniet, Sweden. The bed
is designed to receive a second bunk and storage
boxes on casters below. Wood pegs permit
hanging favorite equipment near at hand.*

73



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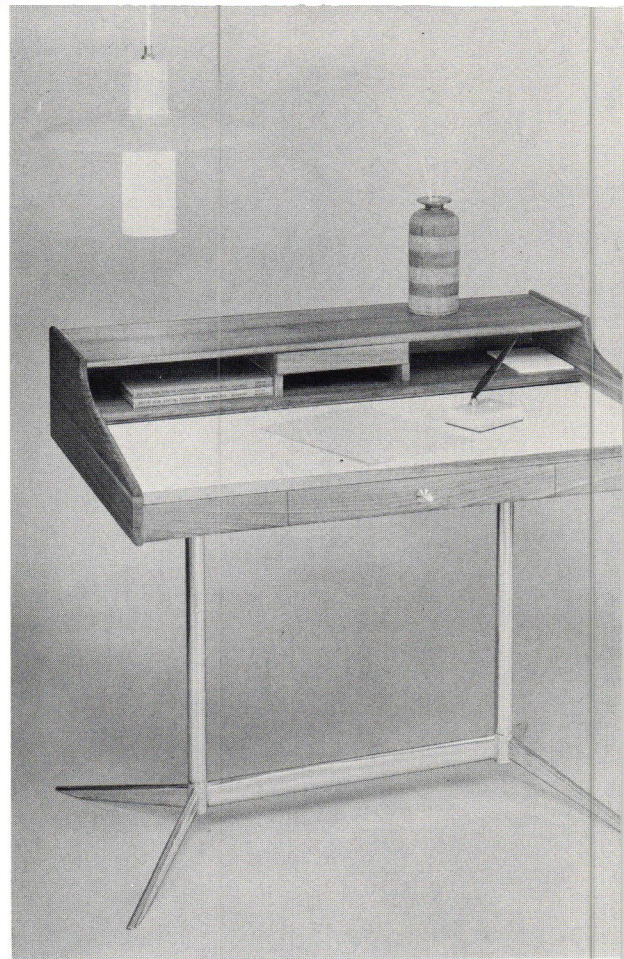


pages thirty-six and thirty-seven

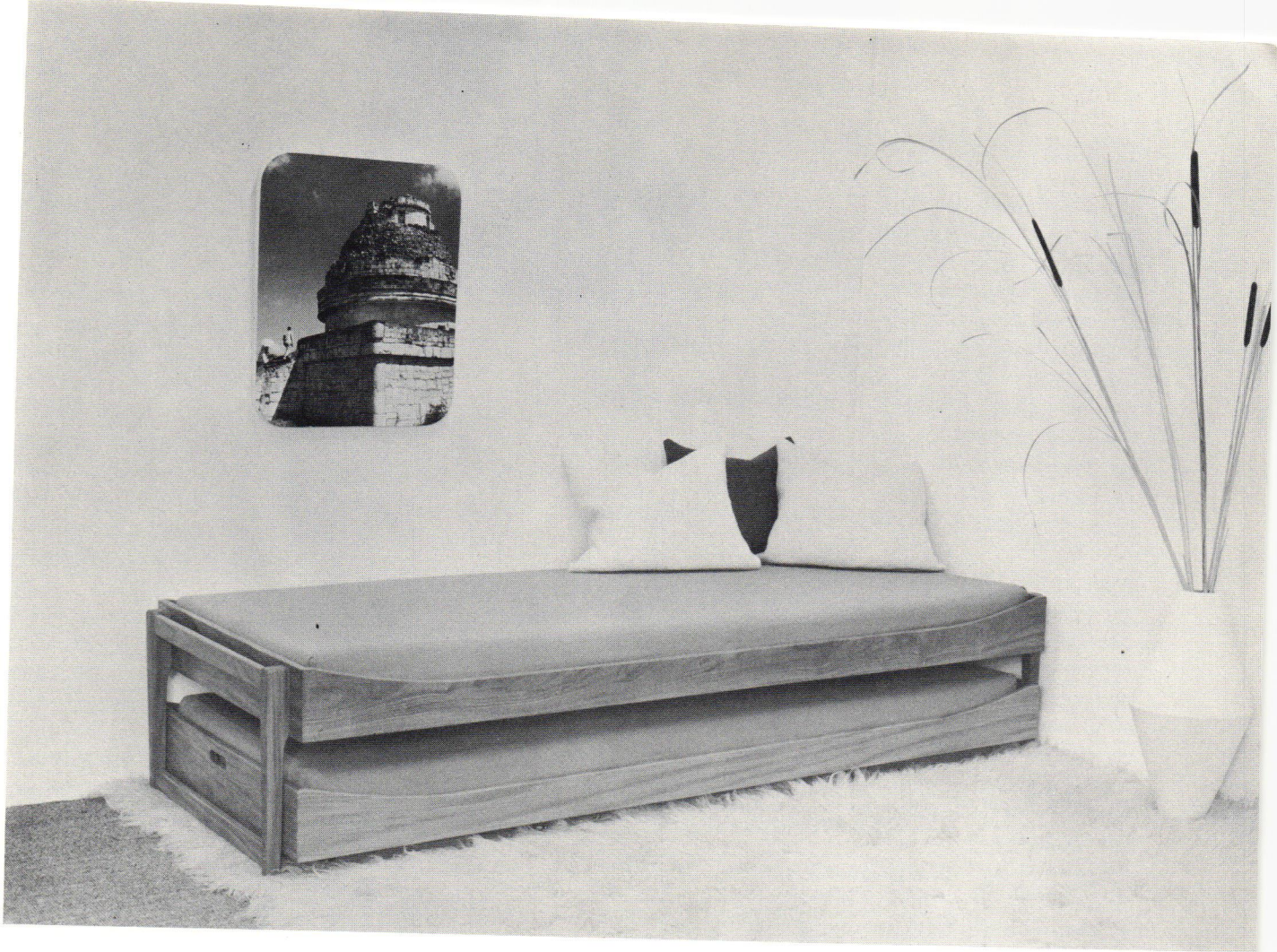
77 *Student desk, designed and made by Field Products. Oiled walnut and Formica on metal base.*

78 *Wall storage units with drop leaf desk, designed by Sven Ellekjaer for Raymor. An extensive line of storage components, which can be combined in varied ways for the older child or adult use. Available in oiled teak or walnut.*

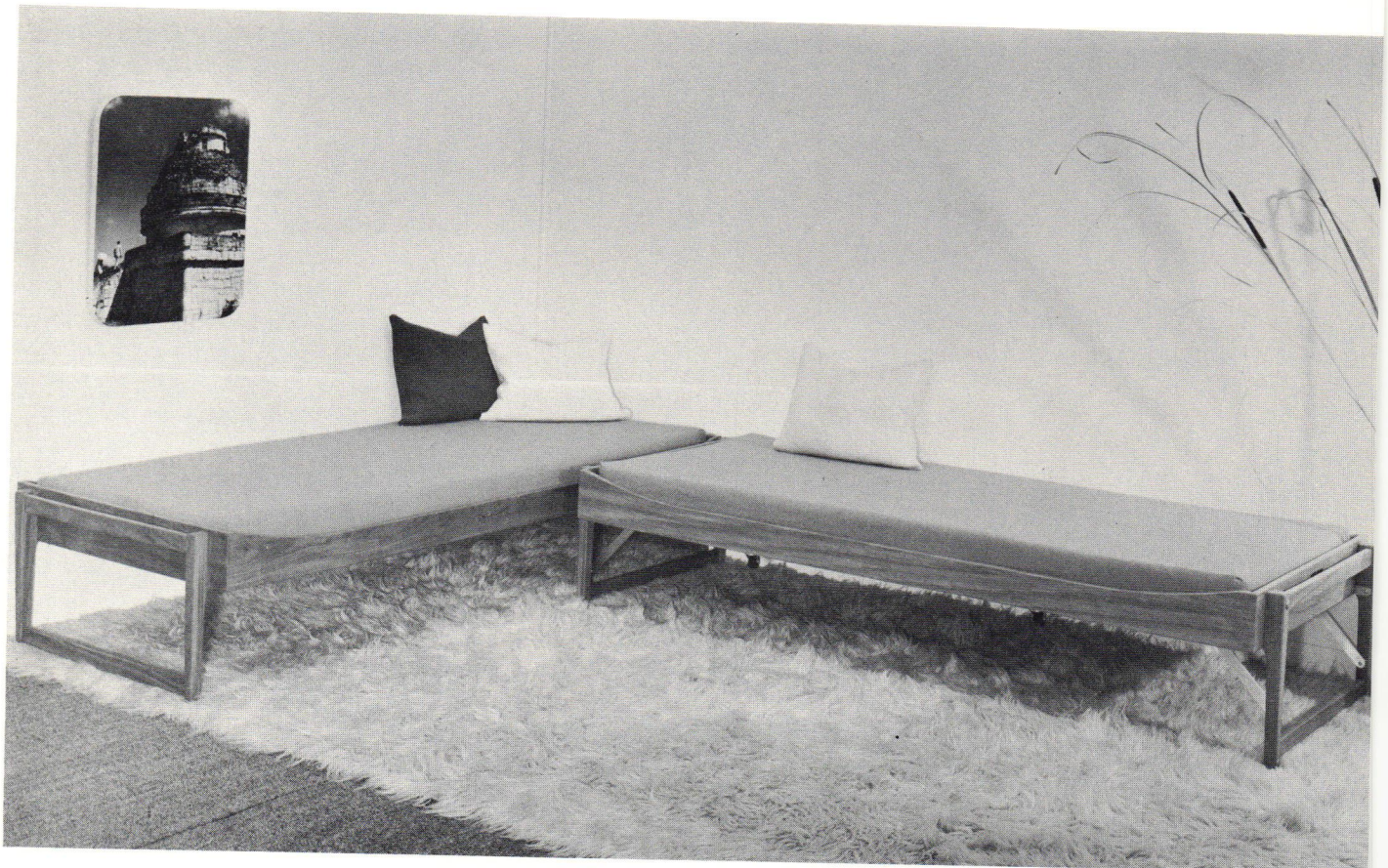
79, 80 *Space saving beds, 1955, designed by Sigrun Bulow-Hube for AKA Furniture Co. Ltd., Canada. Well designed units which solve the guest problem for teen age use or the small adult guest room. Teak.*



79



80



acknowledgments

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