About Junk Modelling

Junk modelling is a non-directive play. By non-directive play I mean a play whereby the child is in charge using their senses, thoughts and sometimes emotion to bring forward what is in their subconscious mind to reality. Adults do not need to interfere during this process but only need to provide the materials needed for children to explore.

What the adults might consider as “junk” are means through which children can show case their creativity. The first thing to consider is the thought process a child goes through in selecting various items provided and the different things that could come out of the same items each time a child tries their hands on them.

I remember child “I” took an empty box of tissue and simply inserted a toilet roll and said, “see my birthday cake” and pretended to blow a candle off the “cake”. She used the same material another time to make what she referred to as “a tower” describing the features. Junk modelling has great advantage on children’s learning and development abilities. It can also potentially create an opportunity for them to own their play thereby helping them to manipulate materials: experiment with materials, use materials to know cause and effect, trial and error with materials which leads to resilience. Once adults understand that play is about process and not the product, it helps them to provide the right environment where children can enjoy an open-ended play experience that is natural to them.

Some of the benefits of junk modelling play for children are:

* Problem solving skills- children learn to solve problem as they position, manipulate, create and recreate etc
* Supports critical thinking and creativity- they use their imagination while testing their ideas and creativity.
* Cognitive development-helps the growth of a child's ability to think and reason
* Gross and fine motor skills-helps with the development of both large and small muscle movements in children
* Self-confidence and self-awareness- they become confident at their achievement
* Language development- it gives opportunity for open ended conversation between adult and children and peers
* Mental wellbeing- having a sense of self and confidence produces mental wellbeing
* It improves concentration- children are often absorbed as they build with the materials provided. They are often not affected by the "noise" both internal and external during junk modelling.

How adults can support:

* Know your child and provide the right environment
* Provide extensive materials-the more the varieties, the better for your child's creativity at play.
* Scaffold the learning taking place through the process- while adults do not need to interfere during the process, it is important to observe closely so as not to miss the teaching points withing the process
* Praise and Compliments-Use praise to build children’s confidence
* Model language