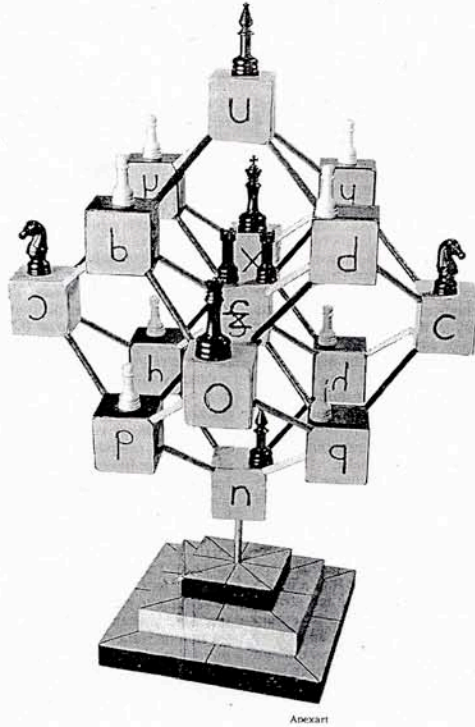


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WEEKEND Arts FINE ARTS LEISURE



Apexart

'PHILOSOPHICAL TOYS' This exceptionally interesting exhibition organized by Sina Najafi, the editor in chief of *Cabinet* magazine, introduces three ingenious people — none of whom are nominally artists — who share a belief that human beings learn best when the spirit of play is systematically engaged. In the 1830's, Friedrich Fröbel devised his famous educational-system kindergarten, which had children play with objects of increasing geometrical complexity. The exhibition presents an array of building-block sets, puzzles and paper construction kits based on Fröbel's system from the collection of Norman Brosterman, author of the book "Inventing Kindergarten." In the early 1950's, Shea Zellweger developed a system of logic based on geometrical relations among the letters of his own "logic alphabet," and, in the 70's, he created colorful, three-dimensional toylike objects that model those relations — see "Logic Garnet," above. And in recent times, Jeannine Mosely, an electrical engineer who designs geometrical modeling software, has applied her mathematical interests to the construction of folded-paper objects. Here she presents a 26-letter "Minimalist Origami" alphabet in which each letter is produced by folding a single square sheet of paper, differently colored on either side, just four times. Also made from single sheets are her three-dimensional "Origami Buds," which look like eggs in individual protective holders. Contemplating the works of these singularly inventive people is oddly tantalizing: the pieces make you feel close to the creative, problem-solving center of the mind. (Apexart, 291 Church Street, TriBeCa, (212) 431-5270, through July 30.)

KEN JOHNSON