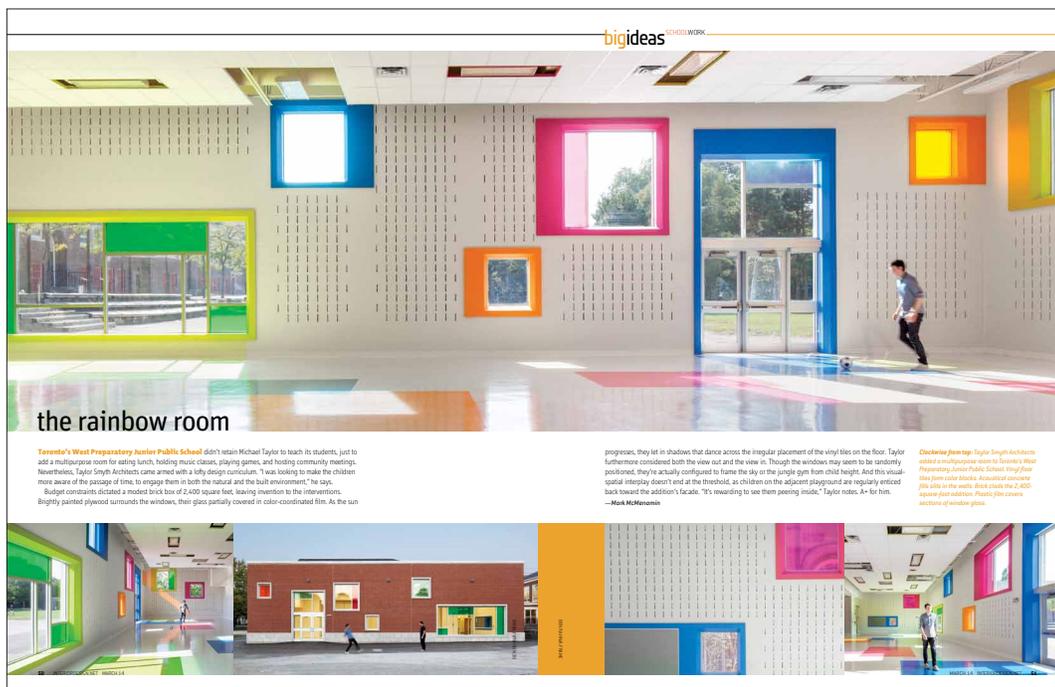


THE RAINBOW ROOM

Mark McMenamin

Toronto's West Preparatory Junior Public School didn't retain Michael Taylor to teach its students, just to add a multipurpose room for eating lunch, holding music classes, playing games, and hosting community meetings. Nevertheless, Taylor Smyth Architects came armed with a lofty design curriculum. "I was looking to make the children more aware of the passage of time, to engage them in both the natural and the built environment," he says.

Budget constraints dictated a modest brick box of 2,400 square feet, leaving invention to the interventions. Brightly painted plywood surrounds the windows, their glass partially covered in color-coordinated film. As the sun progresses, they let in shadows that dance across the irregular placement of the vinyl tiles on the floor, Taylor furthermore considered both the view out and the view in. Though the windows may seem to be randomly positioned, they're actually configured to frame the sky or the jungle gym from child height. And this visual-spatial interplay doesn't end at the threshold, as children on the adjacent playground are regularly enticed back toward the addition's facade. "It's rewarding to see them peering inside," Taylor notes. A+ for him.



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