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## Book Reviews

### **Childhood by Design**

*Megan Brandow-Faller*

New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2018. List of figures, notes, acknowledgments, introduction, and index. 332 pp. \$107.99 paper. ISBN: 9781501332043

Following a symposium at Bard Graduate Center in September 2015, Megan Brandow-Faller compiled this three-part volume that follows, in fourteen chapters, the themes of commodity culture, aesthetic reform, and political indoctrination in children's material culture since the eighteenth century. The introduction discusses the cover image, Peter Opsvik's Tripp Trapp highchair, but the book, in fact, highlights toys, not furniture. In general, it addresses the agency of children through a variety of archival evidence, including financial ledgers, commercial paper models, diaries, unpublished books, memoirs, and magazines.

In part 1, the various contributors discuss toys as commodities—their budgeting, making, critiquing, and marketing. Curator Serena Dyer builds on her knowledge of eighteenth-century fashion to compare Maria and Richard Edgeworth's pedagogical ideals of economic and mate-

rial literacy to pocket books, hybrid toy books, and archival doll dresses. Textile historian Ariane Fennetaux argues that dolls were transitional objects for the aristocrat Laetitia Powel, who collected dolls from age fifteen to seventy-one, creating a “sartorial autobiography” of miniature clothes from remnants of her own. Historian Sarah Curtis describes the rise of novelty shops and department stores in nineteenth-century France, and their critics, especially Léo Claretie, who spoke out against the hypnotic displays, automation, and verisimilitude of toys. And Colin Fanning outlines shifts in the ownership of LEGO blocks and their implications for marketing. Together, these chapters situate toys within larger consumer culture.

In part 2, the various authors engage the reform goals of dress, feminism, and communism through the advocacy of illustrators, doll makers, artists, government agencies, and architects. Art historian Andrea Korda unpacks the symbolism of illustrator and author Walter Crane's *Flora's Feast, A Masque of Flowers* (1889), which featured loose-fitting garments and a negative portrayal of ridged dress to advocate the aesthetic dress

movement. Historian Bryan Ganaway discusses Imperial German doll makers Marian Kaulitz and Kathë Kruse in the context of material and relational feminisms, stressing women's special understanding of children's preferences and describing how manufacturers adopted these abstract character dolls by making so-called improved versions with eyes that closed, jointed limbs, and real hair. Architectural historian Michelle Millar Fisher dissects the play values of the Bauhaus—including seasonal celebrations, Johannes Itten's notion of unlearning, and Walter Gropius's prioritizing of handcrafted toys. (These toys, produced by unpaid students such as Alma Siedhoff-Buscher and Gunta Stölzl, helped finance the school during the Dessau years from 1919 to 1925.) Historian Cathleen Giustino explores the themes of Czech toys around the Thaw (the period of relaxed Soviet dominance over Czechoslovakia in the mid-twentieth century) through special issues of the journal *Tvar* and world's fairs from 1948 to 1967. The Advisory Council for Toys prioritized toys fostering cooperation, displaying technological tools, and depicting clothing for agricultural work. Architectural historian Katherine Wheeler and art historian Karen Stock speculate that Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart's advocacy for colored glass influenced Laurie Simmons and Peter Wright's Kaleidoscope House. Wheeler and Stock also discuss how Simmons's views of gender have changed since the 1970s. In general, these essays try to untangle political activism and artistic practice.

In part 3, the contributors appraise toys as propaganda. Refuting the instructional value of Nuremberg kitchens, art and design historian James Bryan observes

that many did not have functional stoves until the late-nineteenth century (and then, just for reheating food). Instead, Bryan conjectures that these dollhouse kitchens were aesthetically captivating, capturing trends in ornament but not adopting closed cabinets to display kitchenware. Historian Lynette Townsend examines a perspective paper scene incorporating farmyard, town, and railway in the Saxton family collection. Although family members believe their ancestors made the scene during their immigration from Shropshire, Great Britain, to Nelson, New Zealand, in 1842, Townsend shows it to be a collage with different sets by H. G. Clarke Company from around 1864. These toys taught by doing (painting, dexterity, and proportion) and by representing history and geography. They became tools of emotional expression for children dealing with a troubled father. Jakob Zollman, who specializes in colonial law, explores the symbolism of imported toys and the experiences of the bourgeois Rohrbach family in German South West Africa during Wilhelmine era. Tin soldiers portrayed realistic weaponry, of which the Rohrbach children possessed firsthand knowledge in contrast to their counterparts in Germany. Toy animals presented big game hunting in Africa, and animal card games reinforced multilingual (French and English) German children. Black dolls and children narratives reinforced native primitivism and European domination. However, the Rohrbach children learned to read with adult servants and learned native languages from them. Art historian Marie Gasper-Hulvat uncovers that, during the 1920s and 1930s in Stalin's Soviet Union, the Kustar toy centers were well-organized

workshops instead of the cottage industries many considered them. The toys they produced documented mythical ideals of peasant culture rather than historical truth. Finally, in this section of the book, Valentina Boretti argues that toys from republican and communist China from 1910 to 1960 primarily differed in materiality and discourse, which favored cooperative and technological toys, and condemned superstitious dolls. Generally interpreting political indoctrination through toys, these chapters highlight families and toy makers' resistance to dominant rhetoric.

*Childhood by Design* expands upon a common body of research that includes work by Gary Cross, Miriam Forman-Brunell, and Brian Sutton-Smith and, like their books often did, it should prove fascinating to students as well as to scholars. And, also as their work did, *Childhood by Design* poses some new directions in material culture studies.

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—Frederika Eilers, *McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada*

### **Play-Based Interventions for Childhood Anxieties, Fears, and Phobias**

*Athena A. Drewes and*

*Charles E. Schaefer, eds.*

NY: Guilford Press, 2018. Appendices, references, index. 276 pp. \$29.75 paper.

ISBN: 9781462534708

The landscape of play therapy publications has grown considerably over the past ten years. Books dedicated to specific play

therapy approaches, diagnoses, and contexts are readily available for students, therapists, and educators. Stalwarts of play therapy Athena Drewes and Charles Schaefer have teamed up again to edit a wonderfully informative collection of essays focused on a wide array of childhood anxieties from nightmares to post-traumatic anxieties. Drewes and Schaefer assembled a strong and diverse group of authors, including researchers from the United States, Canada, Australia, Spain, and Japan. But most importantly, as the editors suggest, this text addresses the absence of evidenced-based, play-related applications in the current literature dealing with childhood anxiety. For example, many of the authors include a clear and separate section of outcome studies related to their essays. This seems to be an essential feature that can aid clinicians in making informed treatment decisions and help them move beyond an eclectic approach to treating anxiety.

The book is broken into three parts: Common fears, specific disorders, and posttraumatic anxieties. The essays are relatively concise, accessible, and grounded in research. Many of the chapters also include a case vignette that connects theory to practice. Readers will find that the authors have done a nice job of including detailed explanations of possible interventions. Unlike the essays in most other edited play therapy books, each essay here includes information about working with parents and care givers, which provides a much more holistic look at care. For example, Sandra L. Clark and E. Jane Garland offer specific parental activities and reflective questions from the Taming Worry Dragons program.