

of mastery by facing and overcoming challenging problems. Autonomy exists when we feel our actions are freely chosen, when we feel we have a sense of mission and purpose. Relatedness involves knowing who we are and feeling that what we do matters to others and to the world. Rigby and Ryan offer a great many examples of how and why commercial games, including “shooting games,” satisfy these needs. They also offer intriguing experimental data from their own work.

The authors also present excellent discussions of addiction and violence in video games, based on their needs-satisfaction theory. To give one important and interesting example, they show that while some players say they prefer violent games, when faced with a game during which they tag people rather than shoot them, their level of fun and engagement remains just as high. In reality, what captivates them is the satisfaction of their needs and not the violence, though, of course, conflict and the resolution of conflict can help people feel a sense of mastery, of being on a mission, and of mattering to the world.

Rigby and Ryan close with a discussion of games that goes beyond entertainment to engage with school learning, health, social change, and other matters. Our society so poorly meets the intrinsic needs of many in school or on the job, and thus video games hold out the promise of interactive communities of learners that provide people a sense of control, status, value, belonging, mattering—in short, mastery.

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### **Des Jouets et des Hommes**

*Bruno Girveau and Dorothee Charles, eds.*  
Paris: Éditions de la Rmn-Grand Palais,  
2011. Contents, illustrations, appendices,  
bibliography, indexes. 328 pp. \$65.00  
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This comprehensive and extremely attractive book, written in French, comprises the companion volume to what must have been a fascinating and well-documented international exhibition on the history of toys made for Western children from antiquity to the present, with an additional glimpse of twentieth-century toys from Japan. Bearing the same title as the book and jointly organized by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux Grand Palais, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and the Helsinki Art Museum, the exhibit *Des Jouets et des Hommes* (Of Toys and Men) appeared at the National Galleries of the Grand Palais in Paris, France, from September 14, 2011, to January 23, 2012, and subsequently in Helsinki, Finland, from 21 February to May 20, 2012.

While the toys in both book and exhibit came mainly from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs—which holds one of the biggest toy collections in Europe—some of the more interesting and rare artifacts belonged to private collections and other famous European and American museums, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Toy Museum of Nuremberg, and the National Museum of Play at The Strong. Together, these toys are the subject of comparative themes explored by Dorothee Charles and Bruno Girveau, both curators of the exhibit and editors of the volume.

The volume consists of two parts.

The second part, the catalogue, focuses on the discrete exhibit themes: toys and gift giving, animals, automata, simulation of grown-up occupations, gender differences in toys, the impact of media on toys, and the emotionally fraught issue of when children outgrow their toys. Each of these sections features brief introductory essays and includes images of French toys and toys from other countries. An appendix contains a complete list of the 745 items depicted, alphabetical indexes of the inventors, designers, artists, and manufacturers who created the toys, and an impressive bibliography that attests to the international scope of the book. While the catalogue provides important historical information on numerous toys and toymakers, this review focuses mainly on the content of the first part of the book.

Part 1 features an introduction and nine articles written by sociologists, communication scientists, archaeologists, historians, and museum curators who draw on the exhibit for inspiration to discuss important theoretical issues related to the history of toys from an interdisciplinary perspective. Their articles offer fresh insights into a number of important issues concerning the history of commercial toys, play, and childhood.

In their introductory article, Dorothee Charles and Bruno Girveau clarify the exhibit's goal: to shed light on the complex relationships between toys, children, and adults from antiquity to the present while emphasizing how all toys educate and socialize children, from the moment children first acquire them to the point at which they outgrow them. The long time-span of the exhibit, according to the authors, does not aim at a histori-

cal periodization or at the presentation of watersheds in the history of toys. Instead it highlights the presence of enduring themes in the form, content, and symbolism of children's playthings, from ancient rattles to contemporary electronic toys and games. As a result, most of the articles in part 1—and the text of part 2, the catalogue—emphasize continuity over change, pointing to the *longue durée* in toys, including video games.

Gilles Brougère's important theoretical contribution to the volume attempts to untangle an old question about the relationship between human agency and the possibilities and limits that come from our use of inanimate objects. Scholars of material culture and cognitive and developmental psychology have, in recent years, increasingly explored the ways adults craft toys to afford certain possibilities of play and how these toys often embody historical conceptions and discourses of childhood and play. A child's play phone, for example, encourages different sorts of play than a circus set. Brougère's article systematically analyzes the multiple ways in which toys affect children's play by inscribing in their form and design particular affordances (their playability) and images (representations of the world). Playthings exist on a continuum that ranges from a present-centered rhetoric of fun to a future-centered rhetoric of education, and Brougère sees an overall trend in toys over the centuries away from education and towards fun, though he notes that many modern hybrid toys and digital games blur the lines between education and fun.

Stephen Kline's critical analysis of the growth and transformation of the modern toy market offers a useful complement to

Brougère's essay. Kline notes that, in the nineteenth century, the productiveness of industrial capitalism, combined with the invention of the gift-giving Santa Claus (Père Noël) and his inexhaustible bag of toys, promised to all children a range of toys once limited to children of the aristocracy. American toy manufacturers expanded the toy market dramatically in the twentieth century, both domestically and internationally by advertising toys and creating toys linked to film and television—Shirley Temple dolls, Davy Crockett coonskin caps, Batman paraphernalia, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle action figures. Kline, by tracing the evolution of the toy industry, usefully calls attention to the key turning points in its history.

First providing an overview of the toy trade in Classical times, Michel Manson then explores the history of French commercial toys from the medieval era through the present day. Though his discussion of French toy making in the twentieth century is brief, he notes the increasing predominance of German, American, and Japanese manufacturers over French companies. Throughout, he identifies structural parallels in the development of socioeconomic and ideological phenomena in different historical periods. For example, he notes that the emergence of a professional toy trade both in ancient Greece and Rome and in medieval France testifies to a "sentiment of childhood"—a term coined by social historian Philip Ariès to convey both feelings for and an awareness of childhood—and a notion that play offers children legitimate pleasure. These attitudes, found in the nuclear families of the wealthy classes in the fifth-century BCE Greek city-states,

did not characterize the extended families of the feudal aristocracy of the Middle Ages, but they reemerged with the rise of medieval cities in the thirteenth century, and they led, in turn, to the renewal of vibrant toy markets.

Helmut Schwartz tells the history of toy production in Nuremberg, a city known as "the capital of toys" for the last six hundred years. The rise of toy making in Nuremberg stemmed from the economic importance of the city during medieval times. According to Schwartz, the intense exchange of ideas and commodities favored innovation and technological development, which helped establish Nuremberg's reputation for top-notch craftsmanship. Technological innovation and the growing division of labor also contributed to the structural changes in the economy during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, making Nuremberg famous for metal toy companies. Schwartz reveals the important link between production and consumption—the cheap prices of nineteenth-century industrial toys resulted not only from mechanization but also from the long hours of underpaid piecework performed at home by women and children employed to hand paint toys for the factories of Furth and Nuremberg. Schwartz, in fact, cautions visitors of the exhibit against nostalgia for the beautiful metal toys on display by reminding them of the exploited child labor that produced them.

The book pays particular attention to how toys both shape and express children's gender identities. The essays by Véronique Dasen and Dorothee Charles explore these themes in detail, and readers should read them together along with the lavishly illustrated sections "Vocations d'un jour" and

“Les filles et les garçons,” which include about half the pictures in the book. Interestingly, in the overall discussion of toys for boys and girls, the authors eschew the term “gender” (*genre*), which emphasizes the role of culture, in favor of the terms “sex” (*sexuée*), which emphasize biology. Since the volume addresses a French-speaking audience, the authors do not comment on this choice, but it corresponds with the reluctance of most theorists of French feminism to adopt the term *genre*, one that highlights the important role social conventions, as opposed to biology, play in demarcating boys and girls, men and women.

Veronique Dasen’s article relies on excavated archeological materials and written sources to emphasize the importance of toys to both adults and children in Ancient Greece and Rome. Interpreting objects of the past has never been straightforward, and Dasen highlights the importance of the context in which we find toys as one of the keys to understanding their meanings. Some of the toys Ancient Greek and Roman parents gave their offspring bear striking similarities to standard modern toys such as rattles, animal-shaped pull toys, carts, and dolls. Dasen argues for the need to go beyond similarities in form to interpret toys over time. Toys have historically been more than playthings, carrying multifarious meanings and functions. Dolls in girls’ tombs representing adult females with marked bodily features were not meant to be everyday playthings. They were aimed at introducing girls to religious and matrimonial life and perhaps at fulfilling the promise of maternity in the afterlife, a promise that had been rendered impossible by the child’s premature death.

Dorothee Charles, who wrote with Dasen and Girveau many of the texts and captions accompanying the illustrations of the catalogue, also makes the same point. Unfortunately the subtlety of Dasen’s and Charles’s analysis sometimes gets lost in the catalogue section, because ancient toys are displayed next to their modern counterparts. For example, we find a pregnant doll from first-century BCE Myrina on Asia Minor compared with the 1980 Maman Surprise doll (with a removable infant in the doll’s belly, p. 156–57). This obscures the subtle differences in the use and purposes of the toys in different eras. The juxtaposition of ancient and modern toys on the same or adjacent pages suggests continuities not only in the form but also in the meaning of these toys. Continuities do not always exist.

Dorothee Charles explores the continuities and changes in the use of toys for gender socialization by focusing on the historical trajectories of gender in more contemporary children’s playthings. Her innovative approach, rather than taking the gender divide between girls’ and boys’ toys for granted, highlights the semantic shifts and boundary crossings of gender-stereotypical toys, such as dolls and horses, as well as the changes in the ways toys express gender stereotypes. Her investigation of gender stereotypes in the world of toys especially interests us because it addresses the historical development of contemporary color codes denoting gender. Most western adults and children associate pink with girls (or with homosexuality) and blue with boys. Most people do not know, however, that letting pink and blue denote gender originated in the clothing industry during the 1920s,

which in fact used pink for boys and blue for girls. It took more than thirty years for the current color coding to solidify—as the pink shades in the boys’ pages and the blue shades in the girls’ pages of the 1955 catalogue from the Au Bon Marché department store indicate. Jo Paoletti and Carol Kregloh, Julia Grant, Daniel Cook, and Eva Nwokah have linked the development of color-coding in the United States with changes in perceptions about infancy, childhood, and child rearing in the late nineteenth century. Charles reaches similar conclusions about the social construction of gendered color codes from her own research in twentieth-century toy catalogues of French department stores. She also draws on the work of color historian Michel Pastoureau for her account of the shifts in the semiotics of feminine and masculine color symbolism.

Jeanne Damamme explores how children and manufacturers, beginning in the late seventeenth century, have used legends, fictional narratives, and historical events to inspire both play and toys. Damamme’s discussion of how real individuals have inspired folk imagination and children’s make-believe highlights the way experiences and cultural narratives are translated into toys. For example, whereas many children’s toy soldiers and dolls depicted and celebrated Napoleon, Russian toy makers manufactured miniature figures that commemorated the heroism of ordinary Russians in the 1812 destruction of Moscow. Damamme concludes optimistically by noting that—contrary to the concerns of some contemporary toy critics—children remain the masters of their play, using today’s media to their own ends.

Vincent Berry attempts an archaeological study of video games that reframes the usual description of video game culture as a major rupture in the history of play and childhood. Video games first appeared in the late 1950s and a number of factors—such as student hacker experimentation, the development of a science-fiction youth culture, and research funding by the military in during the Cold War—contributed to the rapid development of these games in the 1970s. Where we find turning points usually depends on how we define our analytical categories, and Berry presents a number of possibilities based on different definitions linking video games to a variety of classic toys and games—yo-yos, automata, pinball machines—as well as common cultural phenomena such as science fiction and fantasy play. Berry sheds light on the important parallels between science fiction and the world of toys, which the illustrations of robots and spacecrafts in the exhibit section “Impressions of Life” compliments. Post-1970 developments in the toy and entertainment industry, especially globalization and the emergence of synergistic marketing strategies, have caused a constant recycling of themes among video games, sports, board games, and toys.

Bruno Girveau, in his concluding article of part 1, offers a historical perspective on the rituals by which children acquire—and abandon—their toys. In antiquity, part of the rites of passage to adulthood involved renouncing one’s toys before marriage or the age of majority and dedicating them to particular deities. Today, the transition to adulthood no longer calls for formal rituals—except those marked by school grades and academic

degrees—and yet giving up childhood toys can become a kind of modern, secular rite of passage. In fact, the separation of modern kids from their toys constitutes the central theme of the *Toy Story* film trilogy—a point made also by Kline and Brougère in their essays. Girveau draws on *Toy Story* to trace the trajectories of the unused toys of our childhood. Some toys, at least in the United States and more recently in France, once again became commodities sold to other children in garage sales. Others get stored by parents or children as nostalgic mementoes of childhood. Some are donated to museums, sometimes *in memorium*, such as two dolls displayed in the exhibit, one from a girl killed in a 1904 New York shipwreck and another from a girl who died in the 9/11 tragedy. Abandoning childhood toys does not mean giving up play altogether, as adult preoccupations with toy models or the formation of toy collections attests. Girveau concludes by agreeing with the happy ending of *Toy Story*—toys represent the imaginative potential of reconceptualizing the world, a capacity not compromised by leaving our toys behind when we grow up.

This book makes an important contribution to the scholarly literature on toys. I think it overemphasizes adults' perspectives of children's playthings, giving the

meaning children take from toys no real analytical importance, which is unfortunate in light of the growing archaeological, historical, anthropological, and folklore literature on children's active participation in cultural production and reproduction. But the child's perspective is not missing altogether—as the section on children's pretend play of future professions and the whimsical artistic installation of Pierrick Sorin suggest. Still, it remains marginal. I do not mean to diminish the value of the volume or the quality of its interdisciplinary contributions but, more to point to the need for high-quality exhibits and books that incorporate children's views more actively.

The strength of the book lies in its successful combination of copious details about the toys in the exhibit—which are beautifully portrayed in full-page illustrations—and an exciting interdisciplinary analysis of the toys' historical contexts. The volume offers an invaluable reference book for scholars, laymen, and practitioners interested in historical approaches to childhood, toys, play, education and material culture. I highly recommend its translation from French into English and other languages.

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