

ITRA NEWSLETTER

International Toy Research Association

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<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>



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PROLOGUE

The International Toy Research Association Newsletter is designed to keep members up to date with research in the fields of toys and play. In this issue, readers will find a note from our President, the Call-for-Papers for the 8th ITRA Conference, to be held in Paris 2018, a Member's Profile, the Members' Forum, various publications, conference and exhibition previews and reviews. The newsletter has been formatted to allow the document to be read in either printed form or as a soft copy, which can be found on the ITRA website.



The ITRA website (<http://www.itratoyresearch.org>.) covers the following: a description of ITRA, a brief history of the association, how to become a member, and a catalogue of downloadable newsletters.

Those of you who promised material that never arrived... send it again. For those who made contributions, without which there would be many more blank spaces, a massive thank you.

Enjoy the Newsletter.

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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ITRA

Dear ITRA colleagues and friends,



It is my great pleasure to announce that the 8th ITRA World Conference will be held 11th -13th July 2018 in Paris, France, at MSH Paris-Nord, LA PLAINE SAINT-DENIS 93. Gilles Brougère and his team are already in business organizing the preparation details with great enthusiasm and very promising preliminary results. The Call-for-Papers was issued earlier this month and includes an early January 2018 submission deadline. Further details will be issued as they become available.

Along with the ITRA Board, I would like to thank Gilles Brougère for offering to host the 2018 ITRA Conference and for his continued support and efforts in organising the forthcoming event.

I would like to thank all the ITRA members and Friends of ITRA who rallied round to make an ITRA Conference possible in 2018. A special thank you to Tore Gulden and Vibeke Sjøvoll for all their time and efforts pursuing the possibility of holding the conference in Oslo, Norway. Thank you to Carolina Duek and Noelia Enriz who contacted the ITRA Board, via Daniela Pelegrinelli, offering to hold the 2018 ITRA conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Thank you to David Whitebread from Cambridge University, UK, for his time answering questions about collaborating with PEDAL. Last but not least, thank you to the British Toy and Hobby Association, in particular Roland Earl for his insights and assistance.

In a sense it is unfortunate the ITRA Board can only select one venue for the 2018 Conference – perhaps time will permit us to take up the other kind offers sometime in the future.

Hope to see you in Paris next July!

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International Toy Research Association 8th World Conference

***TOYS AND MATERIAL CULTURE:
Hybridisation, Design and Consumption***

11th-13th July 2018
Paris, France

CALL FOR PAPERS



experice

Centre de Recherche Interuniversitaire Expérience Ressources Culturelles Education

UNIVERSITÉ PARIS 13

U^S-PC
Université Sorbonne
Paris Cité



International Toy Research Association 8th World Conference

TOYS AND MATERIAL CULTURE: Hybridisation, Design and Consumption

Paris, France, 11th-13th July 2018

The 8th World Conference of the International Toy Research Association will be held in conjunction with *Experice* (Experience, cultural resources and education) and *Labex ICCA* (Cultural Industries and Artistic Creation) of the Paris 13 University – Sorbonne Paris Cité University.

The **International Toy Research Association** (ITRA), founded in 1993, is devoted to the scientific study of toys in all their facets. ITRA brings together toy researchers from all corners of the globe (see www.itratoyresearch.org for further information). This is our 8th World Conference to discuss research, collaborate on international projects and exchange information with other researchers, students and leaders in the toy industry. More than 80 international delegates attended our previous meeting in Braga, Portugal in 2014.

The **Experice** ([//experice.univ-paris13.fr/](http://experice.univ-paris13.fr/)) research centre focuses on education outside school, informal learning, play and childhood material culture. It participates in the Labex ICCA.

The ITRA conference will be held at a newly developed Conference Centre, accessible via metro, known as the MSH (Human Sciences House) in Paris-Nord. The Centre is situated at Avenue George Sand in La Plaine Saint Denis (part of the Grand Paris conurbation) and is 2 minutes from the “Front Populaire” station of line 12 of the Paris Metro. The MSH is situated four to six stations from the famous Parisian area of Montmartre.

Conference Themes

The predominant theme for the 8th ITRA Conference is *Toys and Material Culture: Hybridisation, Design and Consumption*.

Beyond toys, the conference will explore the place of tangible objects and novel forms of material culture in play. What are the similarities and the differences, the relationships, between toys and other material devices, such as board games, cards, digital games and media-connected objects? Are there, in play, or in the trans-mediated toys themselves, new forms of materiality?

Three words can summarize this topic:

- Hybridisation: the mix between toys and other playthings or supports; the trans-media franchising and circulation of characters, contents, fictions, and cross-connected toys; the mix between video games and toys; the relationships between toys and technology; and the question of virtual toys.
- Design: the conception of toys and the relationship with other trans-mediated objects addressed to, or of interest to children. Since Experice, the university’s research centre, operates in conjunction with a FabLab specialising in toys and games, known as Ludomaker

([//fr-fr.facebook.com/ludomaker/](https://fr-fr.facebook.com/ludomaker/)), we are particularly interested in encouraging proposals from other FabLabs around the world that also specialise in toys and games.

- Consumption: the marketing, distribution, and use of toys, and their relationship with different kinds of play objects, including the recycling and transformation of everyday objects into playthings.

In addition to the main theme of the conference, other topics relating to toys and material culture are welcome. This includes, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- Toy collecting and toy libraries
- Toys, education, health and environment
- Toys and gender influences
- Toys and intercultural communication
- Toys in history
- Trans-generational toys
- Toys, signs and meanings

We welcome abstracts of completed research, case studies and development projects, as well as incomplete or proposed research or ideas for future research in order to generate discussion and feedback.

To submit a paper, symposium or poster

If you would like to present a paper, organize a symposium or present a poster please submit the requested abstract or proposal, in English, before **8th January 2018**. Submissions should be sent to Gilles Brougère (brougere@univ-paris13.fr).

Papers will be limited to 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for questions and comments. In addition to some basic background information, the abstract must include methodology, research data and results, discussion or conclusion. Authors are also asked to provide which category (from the above list) best fits the description of their paper. The title of the abstract, names, affiliations and email addresses of each contributor should be provided. An abstract should be one A4 page in portrait layout (around 2000 characters). Deadline **8th January 2018**.

Symposia will be limited to 2 hours, with three or four presentations on a common theme. Each proposal should contain the title of the symposium, an overview of the symposium (around 2000 characters), and abstracts of each presentation should be presented in the same format as the papers. Deadline **8th January 2018**.

Posters should be suitable for presentation. Poster sessions usually do not occupy conference time and take place during the coffee breaks. Their duration should be limited to 20 minutes. If you would like to present a poster, please submit a one-page abstract in the same format as the papers. Deadline **8th January 2018**.

The scientific committee will review your abstract or proposal for its suitability to the conference. You will receive a reply by **15th March 2018**.

If you require a response before this date, please apply in writing to Gilles Brougère (brougere@univ-paris13.fr) when you submit your paper, symposium or poster.

Publications

Conference proceedings will be published in the open archive HAL ([//hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/](http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/)). Participants who wish to have their full paper published are required to submit it to Gilles Brougère (brougere@univ-paris13.fr) by **15th September 2018**.

2018 ITRA - BTHA PRIZE FOR OUTSTANDING TOY RESEARCH

The ITRA-BTHA Prize has been established with generous support from the British Toy and Hobby Association (www.btha.co.uk). The first ITRA-BTHA Prize was awarded in July 2008 during the 5th ITRA conference in Nafplion, Greece. ITRA expects to give two awards at each ITRA World Conference. One award of £500 will be given for the best student research on toys and one award of £1,000 to a senior scholar or practitioner on the uses, design and effects of toys.

The Prize recipients will also receive a travel stipend of £500 each toward the ITRA Conference and will present their research at that conference.

Purpose

The purpose of the ITRA-BTHA Prize is to recognise outstanding research in the field of toy research. To qualify for the Prize, the work must have been conducted or published since the previous ITRA Conference and be submitted by the researcher or nominated by a member of ITRA.

Eligibility

Papers, either published or unpublished, in any area of toy research, are eligible. Submissions should be in the English language (original or translation). Research on the uses, design, and effects of toys in child development, education, science, and medicine will be considered for the awards. Theoretical and historical papers will also be considered as long as these are linked to potential research.

Submissions of postgraduate dissertations or books are also welcome. These should be accompanied by a summary of 2500-3000 words. Hard copies of books should be provided to each prize committee member upon request.

Submissions

ITRA-BTHA Prize papers should be submitted to Gilles Brougère (brougere@univ-paris13.fr) before **8th January 2018**.

The Awards Committee consists of Mark Allen (UK), Gilles Brougère (France), Cleo Gougoulis (Greece), and Greta Pennell (USA).

Evaluation

The Awards Committee of ITRA will evaluate applications on the basis of originality, the significance of the work, creativity, methodology, clarity of presentation, and importance.

The 2018 ITRA-BTHA prizes will be awarded during the 8th ITRA World Conference in Paris, France, 11th-13th July 2018.

Registration and Fees

Registration for the conference will be available online only, opening in early 2018. The conference fee must be paid by credit card. Your registration will not be valid until you have successfully completed the entire process and received a confirmation of registration and payment. If you are unable to register online via credit card, please contact Gilles Brougère (brougere@univ-paris13.fr).

There will be two registration periods, early and regular. Student fees are applicable only to full-time university students who can present an official certificate of their student status the first day of the conference.

- | | |
|---|------------|
| • Early registration until 1 st May 2018 | 300.00 EUR |
| • Late registration after 2 nd May 2018 | 340.00 EUR |
| • Student early registration until 1 st May 2018 | 200.00 EUR |
| • Student late registration after 2 nd May 2018 | 230.00 EUR |

Registration fee includes all conference sessions, conference materials, scheduled meals, refreshments at breaks. It also includes a trip to the *French Museum of Playing Cards* (www.museecarteajouer.com/) on the evening of the 12th July 2018. Museum entry fee, demonstration and meal inclusive of registration fee.

The fee does not cover accommodation and travel expenses.

Financial Support

Limited financial support will be available to participants for whom registration fees and/or travel costs present a hardship. Please submit your request for financial consideration before **8th January 2018** to the ITRA Treasurer, Cleo Gougoulis (cleogougoulis@yahoo.gr).

Conference deadlines

Abstracts of papers - **8th January 2018**
Proposals for symposia - **8th January 2018**
Abstracts of posters - **8th January 2018**
ITRA-BTHA prize submissions - **8th January 2018**
Request for financial assistance - **8th January 2018**
Response from review committee by - **15th March 2018**
Early registration until - **1st May 2018**

Venue Details

The conference will be held at MSH (Human Sciences House) Paris-Nord, a new and interesting building dedicated to research in human sciences close to a new university campus for human sciences under construction.

The conference centre is situated at 20 Avenue George Sand in La Plaine Saint-Denis (part of the Grand Paris conurbation) and is a two minute walk from the "Front Populaire" Paris Metro station (Line 12). It is situated 4 to 6 stations from the famous Parisian area of Montmartre.

Travel Information

Paris is easily accessible from anywhere around the world and is served by two international airports (Orly and Charles de Gaulle). It is worth noting that some low cost flights (for example Ryanair) arrive in Beauvais Airport, which is 85 km from Paris (approximately a 75 minute bus journey).

High Speed trains (Eurostar, Thalys, Lyria, and TGV) connect Paris to various other major continental cities and an efficient road system makes travel to Paris, by car or coach, a viable option from other European countries.

The Paris Metro has a well developed rail network which means the conference centre is around 15 to 30 min from downtown Paris.

Accommodation

The conference centre at MSH Paris Nord is situated on a university campus which is currently under construction which limits the availability of cheap student or hotel accommodation. Conference attendees are advised to book hotels in areas in close proximity to the Paris Metro Line 12. This includes the Montmartre, Pigalle, Grands Boulevards and Grands magasins, Opera, Tuileries, the fashion district and Sèvres-Babylone areas, all of which are within 15 to 30 minute Metro journey to the MSH conference centre (see www.plandeparis.info/paris-metro/metro-map.html).

Accommodation should be booked directly with the hotel. Useful websites include:

- <http://www.lastminute.com/hotels/paris.html>
- <https://www.booking.com/>
- <http://www.hoteldirect.co.uk/paris/>
- <https://www.hostelbookers.com/hotels/france/paris/>
- <https://uk.hotels.com/de504261-qu0/cheap-hotels-paris-france/>
- <https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/HotelsList-Paris-Cheap-Hotels-zfp20355.html>

Committees

Scientific Committee

Mark Allen, Serious Fun Research Labs, Woking, UK
Vincent Berry, Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité, France
Gilles Brougère, Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité, France
Jeffrey H. Goldstein, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
Cleo Gougoulis, University of Patras, Greece
Luisa Magalhães, Catholic University of Portugal, Braga, Portugal
Greta Pennell, University of Indianapolis, USA
Suzy Seriff, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Lieselotte Van Leeuwen, University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Inès de la Ville, University of Poitiers, France

Organizing Committee

Mark Allen, Serious Fun Research Labs, Woking, UK
Vincent Berry, Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité, France
Gilles Brougère, Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité, France
Nicolas Pineros, Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité, France
Nathalie Roucous, Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité, France

MEMBER PROFILE – Greta Pennell



Greta Pennell is currently Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Indianapolis (UIndy), USA.

Greta grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and earned a BSc. in Zoology from Iowa State University and later an MA. in Science Education from Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. While studying for her MA, she also taught 7th and 8th grade science and served as the assistant curator of the Science Spectrum gallery at the Indianapolis Children's Museum. Greta and her husband, Jim, moved to the Boston area where she taught 7th, 9th, and 10th grade biology in the Hingham, Massachusetts Public Schools and earned a second

Masters degree in Educational Administration from the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Later, at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, she earned an MA and PhD. in Developmental/Social Psychology. In 1997 Greta accepted a faculty position at Uindy where she has served as director of the MA program in Curriculum & Instruction (1997-2005) and Executive Director of Honors College (2005-2012) and most recently as the School of Education Accreditation Coordinator. Her research interests are highly interdisciplinary and varied but revolve around gender, toys, education, and social justice.

Greta has been a member of ITRA since 1996 and served on the ITRA Board since 2014.

When asked how her involvement with ITRA had come about, Greta replied, “Pure serendipity, or perhaps more precisely, Brigitta Almquist found me.” At the time, in the early 1990s, Greta was working on her PhD dissertation collecting data on children's Santa requests and investigating their toy preferences. To this day, Greta is unsure how Brigitta had found out about her research, but it led to an exchange of e-mails and Brigitta graciously sending a hardcopy of her dissertation, via air/surface mail. Greta described the receipt of Brigitta's dissertation as the inspiration she required to take a new tack for categorizing toys as "girl-typed," "boy-typed," or "gender-neutral" and used this typing as three distinct unipolar dimensions rather than points on opposite ends of a single continuum with gender-neutral in the middle. Greta described Brigitta as an invaluable resource and source of support during the final stages of data analysis and writing.

Much like Greta's introduction to ITRA, her involvement in toy research was also somewhat serendipitous. Throughout her doctoral preparation, in the Rutgers University Social/Developmental Psychology program, Greta worked on something called the *Self-Perception Project*, focused on gender identity. During a number of earlier interviews, several of their research participants talked about their favourite toys. Greta was struck with the ways in which they identified or connected with the toys—not in stereotypically gendered play categories, but rather in terms of the personal or relational significance of the toys in the interviewee's life, i.e., a connection to the person who had given them the plaything or some other memorable/special event in their life. At this same time Greta served as a graduate assistant in the Marketing Department with the School of Business at Rutgers. Greta's search for a dissertation topic, while moving back and forth between the disciplines of marketing and gender, led her to the intersection of children's consumer behaviour, gender and ultimately to toys.

It was during a particularly long and frustrating day of PhD work that Greta received an invitation to the first ITRA Conference in Halmstad, Sweden, 1996. Greta described the invite as an immense honour, adding, “I went from giddy excitement to Eeek! as soon as the first newsletter came with the preliminary program, filled with presentations by scholars whose work I had been reading and admired. They included what I considered the “royalty” of the field of developmental psychology and toy and play research - Dorothy and Jerome Singer, Greta Fein, Brian Sutton-Smith, just to name a few.” At this point in Greta's fledgling academic career, she had already presented at prestigious conferences, such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the Association for Consumer Research (ACR). She had witnessed firsthand what could happen to doctoral candidates at conferences like the American Sociological Association (ASA) where some academics seemed to pride themselves on what Greta described as, “slicing and dicing younger scholars with a ‘what doesn't kill you makes you stronger’ kind of attitude.” So, it was with a reasonable amount of trepidation that Greta entered the large auditorium on the first day of the 1996 ITRA Conference. However, what greeted her, in Greta's own words, was “a warm, giant hug from Brigitta and introductions all around” and sincere interest and support from all those attending the conference. At Halmstad, Greta found ITRA to be an intellectual home, where she did not have to argue for why toys were important to study, but rather where conversations and queries challenged her to think more deeply, piquing her research imagination. Further, she found ITRA to be a place where she could be at home amongst some of the most supportive and encouraging research colleagues she had encountered. ITRA included people, many of whom were already internationally renowned and who had made huge contributions to the field of toy research, who treated her as an equal fellow scholar and researcher.

Reflecting on ITRA in general, Greta describes our association as having a hugely positive influence on her academic career. Her connections with ITRA, including the letters of support from ITRA colleagues for her promotion two years ago to full Professor at University of Indianapolis, were invaluable. Greta observes that

junior faculty members, particularly in the USA, are often encouraged to attend or present at influential conferences like ASA, AERA and APA (American Psychology Association). As academic institutions cut back on financial support for faculty to travel to such conferences, where the hotel room bill alone can be daunting, it may seem hard to fit in smaller, more niche conferences. Yet Greta has found that her most meaningful and longest lasting professional relationships - ones that lead not only to significant research but also life-long friendships - have been forged and developed through just such niche organizations like ITRA. It is this kind of supportive network that makes ITRA especially important to her and the one of the conferences that she looks forward to the most throughout the year. This is certainly the case with the 2018 ITRA Conference in Paris, where Greta eagerly anticipates another boost of inspiration from new and long term members who are carrying out interesting work in toy research. As she so astutely notes, "How lucky we are to engage in important research and work that also allows, even requires, us to keep the heart and mind of a child."

Greta observes that, in her opinion, the biggest challenge for ITRA, as for many smaller associations, is being broad and interdisciplinary enough to draw sufficient engagement from participants. She identifies engagement both in terms of membership and conference presentations, but also in terms of active involvement in the work of the association. ITRA is fortunate to have a dedicated core of researchers who have been engaged since day one, working tirelessly to make sure that things maintain order, vitality, and purpose, and continue moving forward. At the same time, she believes that the association requires more folks to step up and speak up to ensure that ITRA continues to be a vibrant and effective organization. In particular, Greta would like to see greater participation from the toy industry, from non-governmental organizations, and governmental regulatory agencies active in ITRA. She is acutely aware that this can be a fine line to walk, so that one perspective does not overshadow the others, but she believes strongly that ITRA's standing, and the relevance and importance of our work, could be enhanced with broader participation.

Since her election to the ITRA Board, during the 2014 ITRA Conference in Braga, Greta has been an active, insightful and positively vocal member of the Board. Greta commented that her time on the Board has been a rewarding learning experience. Although she is aware that undoubtedly there are challenges ahead, she has quickly learned that what seemed straightforward and easy in an American context, is far more complex and nuanced in an international organization. ITRA, Greta continues, has been fortunate over the years to have had many thoughtful leaders, with a deep understanding of the international stage on which we find ourselves.

Like many fellow ITRA members, Greta has found her level of toy specific research heavily influenced by the opportunities afforded her, and obligations to, her home university. For example, when Greta was named Executive Director of the UIndy Honours College, the task of re-building the program and other administrative demands of that position left little or no time for toy research. However, once she returned to a regular faculty position, Greta was more easily able to turn her attention to her beloved toy-related projects. Staying connected to toy research, through associations like ITRA, helped Greta open new doors and avenues for using the research to design new interdisciplinary courses, like the *Gender in Toyland* seminar she designed and taught for first year students.

Currently Greta is helping to lead the School of Education at UIndy through accreditation. This was not what Greta had planned on doing, but last year when her Dean announced a three month retirement plan, with the self-study due in six months, Greta felt she could not say no. This sent her head long into accreditation writing and training, including being appointed to a 3 year term to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Greta hopes that by the time that ITRA members are reading this profile, her university will have had a successful accreditation visit and her application for a sabbatical will be approved, so she may return her attention to toy research.

As a successful and dedicated professor, Greta works hard to navigate with her students the murky waters of post-graduate careers in toy-related fields of research or practice. She observes that such career opportunities seem to be expanding as more attention is paid to the intersectionality of toys, art, science, and industry, the definitions and study of what counts as a toy and who plays with them expands. This intersectionality, she notes, is creating an increasingly fruitful and innovative path for young scholars and designers.

When Greta is not involved in research or university-related administration, she enjoys spending time in the garden, behind her camera lens or fishing and sailing with her husband at their little vacation camp on the northern Gulf of Mexico coast.

Serendipity may be defined "as the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way." It is arguably to the benefit of both ITRA and toy research in general that serendipity (or Brigitta Almquist) played a part in Greta Pennell and the association crossing paths. We trust that serendipity will continue to facilitate a lasting and fruitful relationship between Greta, ITRA and the field of toy research, most broadly, to the mutual and delightful benefit of all three.

MEMBERS' FORUM

Please remember when you do send items for inclusion in the Newsletter to send them in a downloadable form.

INDIA

Surabhi Khanna sent us the following article, entitled *A Family with Toys as Teacher*:

My first toy was actually made by my mother (as much as I remember). It was from kneaded dough when she was rolling *rotis*. She used to make small balls and long limbs, to create head, limbs and trunk of an elephant, create a bird and many more animals. I loved the feel of the *atta* and used to imitate the forms with more *atta*, rolling, kneading.

My father, a toy-product designer, often gave me all his valuable toy samples and the toys he made for his research, as I was his ever-ready user. As a user, I did total justice and gave good feedback. I *broke* most of his toys and hence he used to work on them again and add play value. He later said “you know Surabhi, the best way to learn is to break a toy; the next best is to make it.” Every vacation I used to sit with Bapu and make hundreds of a particular toy to prepare our new-year greeting to friends around the world. This became a tradition. Bapu used to carefully place every toy with play info and wishes and put them into an envelope. These were a few of my first experiences to know the joy of gifting.

Making each toy over and over again for many days, taught me patience, attention to detail. If a toy didn't work, make sound or move the way it was supposed to, I would ask many questions and try to figure out. “No toy is a bad toy,” Bapu would explain, when I wanted to throw a non-working toy away. “It only has moods, just like you do.” A simple sentence which imparts empathy to living or non-living things alike, without stating so: Buzzing Bee, Turning Tree, Tik-Tik were all part of my childhood.

Later my sister Girija and I would make many magic flowers, flipping flowers. We would give the first few ones to Maa (our mother) to get her critical review. The play and toy making activity helped us bond as a family. Be it Bapu's book releases, interviews, international workshops, awards, interviews or just simple struggles with making a toy work—the whole family would share in the experience.

My interest in designing toys soon evolved to architecture. But my childhood experiences and the urge to work with my father helped me decide to undergo a toy & game design program at NID. Bapu (Sudarshan Khanna) and I have since been conducting many workshops together with groups of educators, designers, and school children to promote the value of design and play in education. It was the process of playful learning from Bapu that helped me connect work and life. I hope to share such playful experiences with many more.



Surabhi & Bapu play with Rabbit & demonstrate how to make it for students at Aabenra University, Denmark

Encouraging children to ‘make a toy’ helps them understand how much effort goes into ideation, precision, material knowledge and curiosity to create and develop. In the urban areas, I am seeing a growing awareness in parents about the importance of encouraging children towards creativity and skill development. The easy availability and use of recycled materials and simple tools can help create a learning-lab/makerspace atmosphere at home. Digital media is also an interesting tool for sharing many ideas and video projects with children. But I think it is even nicer to joyfully create handmade playful things as a family, with parents, grandparents and children all coming together.

I would love to see the toys you design in your family.

Happiness & Playfulness

Surabhi

More information can be found at: www.surabhikhanna.com

USA

Greta Pennell sent us the following film review:

A Lego Brickumentary

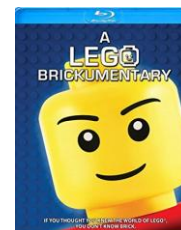
Directors: Kief Davidson, Daniel Junge

93 minutes w/ Spanish and English Subtitle options

Danish-American Documentary Produced by Radius, Gem Pictures, Tiburon Pictures and

Helo Production in association with Futuristic Films and Milkhaus. July, 2015

See the official trailer at: <http://alegobrickumentary.com/trailer>



There are over 100 lego pieces for every person on the planet. This is just one of the opening tidbits from this feature-length fast-paced documentary using both animation and live action. The film traces the Lego history beginning in Denmark in 1916 through today. Interviews with Master Builders, children, Lego employees, celebrities, fans, and members of various user groups are richly illustrated with amazing examples of Lego constructions from small to mammoth. One of the most notable of these constructions is the life sized X-wing Fighter Jet that weighed in at 44,000 pounds with a 44 foot wing span.

The brickumentary features activities from Fan/User Lego Conferences from around the world although the focus is primarily on those held in the United States (e.g., Brick Con, Brick World, Brick Fair). There is a rapid fire translation of an array of Lego acronyms that constitute the language of Lego Communities (e.g., AFOL - Adult Fan of Lego, BURP - Big Ugly Rock Piece, POOP – Parts that can be made Out of Other Parts). While these acronyms and other phrases represent a specialized language, the Lego pieces themselves are described as a global language, one that is more universally understood than English because the instruction/language is embedded in the system itself.

Another section of the film features a Danish mathematician who is trying to calculate whether the number of configurations possible with Lego is infinite.

A little over half way into the film, attention turns to some of the challenges the company faced in the early 1990's through the early 2000's, and how the introduction of Mindstorms opened design to beyond Lego corporate headquarters. By embracing early crowd servicing and encouraging user groups, Lego went from a toy to a tool. Examples of "Lego Bombing" of the Berlin Wall and other Lego art installations, and the development of its architectural series, are presented to illustrate the extensive expansion of Lego's influence. As a developmental psychologist and teacher educator, I found the segment on Dr. Dan LeGoff's model of Lego Therapy to establish an anxiety free zone to encourage collaboration between and therapy for children with autism particularly interesting.

Overall the storyline is very positive and pro Lego, to the point that it borders on a promotional corporate video rather than a documentary. Almost all the footage of the Lego bricks and constructions from them use traditional colored Legos. The color palettes from the Lego Friends line are noticeably missing. There is a very short mention of Lego's attention to getting more girls to build but this is little more than a side comment by a female amateur builder who has won a People's Choice Award three times. In her interview, Ms. Finch indicates that young girls thank her for being a role model. This was a welcome turn given the earlier discussion of attention to 1x5s (e.g., "hot girls") at Brick Conventions. However, failure to mention that Ms. Finch's award winning construction of Rivendell was done in collaboration with another builder and that builder was male seemed counterproductive. Indeed, greater attention to gender issues and consideration of Lego's decisions relative to the Lego Friends line would have been a nice complement to the next segment on secondary markets for Lego accessories and the corporate decision regarding production (or more precisely the non-production) of modern weapons for their mini figs.

If you are well versed in the Lego corporate story or are quite familiar with the toy, then it is unlikely that the film will shed any new light or provide many insights into the toy, its play value or the basis for its popularity. Nevertheless seeing the designs and creative ways users are quite literally breaking the mold is interesting, especially when coupled with some of the personal stories of users and how they came to be professional Lego designers.

CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

This section covers current, up-coming and past conferences and exhibitions. Hopefully mentioning past events will not induce depression as to what you may have missed, while we trust previews of future events will whet your appetite to attend. Previews and reviews of conferences are sought for the next edition of the ITRA Newsletter.

FUTURE CONFERENCES

January 2018

Kids@Play will be held at Venetian, Las Vegas, USA, 10th January 2018. Adults focus on the digital world while kids see less distinction. Ninety percent of parents report introducing their kids to technology before school ever starts. Since the mid-00's, tech and smart toys have dominated the industry's growth. Smartphones, wearables, tablets, robots, connected toys, and the Internet of Things are taking centre stage in a world where kids see screens and tech as just one of life's digital extensions.



For more information visit:

<http://miniaturescene.com/Fair-Dates>

PAST CONFERENCES and EXHIBITIONS

August 2017

Hot Wheels: Race to Win Special Exhibit at the Indianapolis Children's Museum. Indianapolis, USA, May – 13th July 2017.

May was race month in the host city of the “greatest spectacle in racing,” the Indianapolis 500. This interactive exhibit of all things related to Hot Wheels provided visitors an opportunity to be part of a dynamic race team working together to build and test the world's fastest (and safest) speed machines, using Hot Wheels die-cast cars to experiment and play. For further information see the following website:

<https://www.childrensmuseum.org/>

September 2017

The International Play Association Conference was held in Calgary, Canada in September 2017.

The theme of the conference was *Unleashing the Power of Play*.

For more information visit:

<http://arpaonline.ca/events/ipacalgary2017/>

November 2017

Leeds Dolls House Fair was held at Pudsey Civic Hall, Pudsey, UK, 4th November 2017.

Leeds Dolls House Fair is a one day event showcasing products like various antique and modern dolls houses, miniature furniture, accessories and many more related products and services etc. in the Gifts & Handicrafts, Toys & Games industries.

For more information visit:

<http://miniaturescene.com/Fair-Dates>

PlayFair was held in Javits Center, New York City, USA, 4th – 5th November 2017.

Play Fair is a celebration of play and entertainment for all ages. It is an immersive, experience-rich event for children, parents, families, and teenage and adult fans. With hands-on exhibits, awe-inspiring displays, dozens of toy and entertainment brands, and never-before-seen exclusives, attendees can feel, touch, and take home their favourite toys and games — and be the first to glimpse the toys of tomorrow!

The first Play Fair took place 13th – 14th February 2016 and completely sold out with over 20,000 attendees. Play Fair 2016 welcomed brands including LEGO, Nickelodeon, Toys”R”Us, Hasbro, Mattel, Crayola, Cartoon Network, Moose Toys, Marvel, and DC Comics and featured exclusive toys, live stage performances, and appearances by SpongeBob SquarePants, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, PAW Patrol, Power Rangers Dino Super Charge, Adventure Time’s Finn and Jake, Peppa Pig, PJ Masks, and much more!

For more information visit:

<http://www.playfairny.com/#>

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Until January 2018

Play!, The Autry Museum in Griffith Park, Los Angeles, USA, until 7 January 2018.

Experience the next level of toys and games at this new Autry exhibition. Through more than 200 historic objects from the Autry's diverse collections, *Play!* explores the role of toys and games across cultures and over time. Featuring dolls, board games, video games, outdoor activities, and more, the exhibition looks at the many ways children have played in the American West, the social values toys reveal, and how the West has inspired imagination. Beyond the displays, visitors are invited to get hands-on with games of the past and present—no assembly required.

For more information visit:

<https://theautry.org/exhibitions/play>

Until February 2018

Play: Toys Reimagined as Art, Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, Virginia, USA, until 18th February 2018.

The exhibition highlights artists who use toy-like materials to create magically transformative installations, videos and sculptures for “the kid in all of us.” The exhibition features site-specific works by six artists working in diverse media from crayons to building blocks and inflatables. With its highly interactive and engaging artworks, *Play* focuses on the similarities between how children and adults experience various playful habits of invention, such as curiosity, imagination, and problem solving.

For more information visit:

<http://www.taubmanmuseum.org/calendar/9554/play-toys-reimagined-as-art>

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS

December 2017 until April 2018

Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring a Classic, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK, from 9th December 2017 through till 8th April 2018.

This exhibition will reveal the story behind the creative partnership of A.A. Milne and E.H. Shepard and the factors contributing to the phenomenal success and enduring popularity of Winnie-the-Pooh. Designed for both children and adults, visitors will be led on a multi-sensory journey to rediscover these classic books such as discovering language as a child, and inspiring creativity with drawing.

For more information visit:

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/winnie-the-pooh-exploring-a-classic>

September 2018

Kaiju vs Heroes: Mark Nagata's Journey through the World of Japanese Toys, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, USA.

Take a journey through the world of Japanese soft vinyl *kaiju* (monster) and hero toys, courtesy of toy designer Mark Nagata's unrivalled collection of vintage figurines. Born out of the cultural ashes of World War II, these distinctive toys became both a means for Japanese Americans to reconnect with their culture and an apt metaphor for post-war relations between the United States and Japan.

For more information visit:

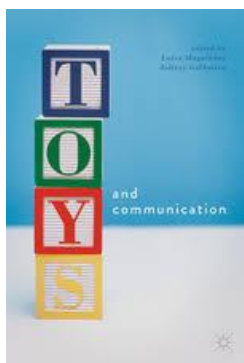
<http://www.janm.org/exhibits/kaiju-vs-heroes/>

PUBLICATIONS & BOOKS

Book reviews, or book recommendations, are sought for the next edition of the ITRA Newsletter. Please submit these to the Editorial Team at itraneuwltr@gmail.com. This edition also includes calls for papers on upcoming publications.

Magalhães, L., Goldstein, J. (Eds.) (2017). *Toys and Communication*. Palgrave Macmillan.

There are few scholarly books about toys, and even fewer that consider toys within the context of culture and communication. *Toys and Communication* is an innovative collection that effectively showcases work by specialists who have sought to examine toys throughout history and in many cultures, including 1930's Europe, Morocco, India, Spanish art of the 16th - 19th centuries.



Psychologists stress the importance of the role of toys and play in children's language development and intellectual skills, and this book demonstrates the recurrent theme of the transmission of cultural norms through the portrayal, presentation and use of toys. The text establishes the role of toy and play park design in eliciting particular forms of play, as well as stressing the child's use of toys to 'become' more adult. It will be beneficial for courses in education, developmental psychology, communications, media studies, and toy design.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

- 1) Buzz about Toys R Us filing bankruptcy
<http://www.worldofbuzz.com/toys-r-us-just-officially-filed-bankruptcy-protection-heres-know/>
- 2) Toys 'R' Us bankruptcy fears hit Mattel and Hasbro
<http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/18/investing/toys-r-us-bankruptcy-reports-hasbro-mattel/index.html>
- 3) The Geek Tailor launches new inclusive doll
<http://www.toynews-online.biz/news/read/the-geek-tailor-launches-new-inclusive-doll/049406>
- 5) A couple created the 'world's first Welsh singing toy' and it sold out almost immediately
<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/couple-created-worlds-first-welsh-13698160>
- 6) Kinder Surprise eggs are being slammed for sexist packaging and toys
<http://metro.co.uk/2017/10/12/kinder-surprise-eggs-are-being-slammed-for-sexist-packaging-and-toys-6994509/>
- 7) 46% of toys and games will be sold online by 2022, says GlobalData
<http://www.toynews-online.biz/news/read/46-of-toys-and-games-will-be-sold-online-by-2022-says-globaldata/049397>
- 8) More phthalates banned in children's toys by US government
<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/20/health/phthalates-banned-in-childrens-toys/index.html>
- 9) Outdoor nursery where kids make their own toys run by ex-Leicester teacher is Britain's best
<http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/outdoor-nursery-kids-make-toys-650541>
- 10) The most unintentionally terrifying kids' toys ever have been revealed.
<https://www.thesun.co.uk/fabulous/4664346/unintentionally-terrifying-kids-toys-evil-looking-teddies-creepy-clowns/>
- 11) Benaki Museum unveils a castle full of toys
<http://www.ekathimerini.com/222635/article/ekathimerini/life/benaki-museum-unveils-a-castle-full-of-toys>
- 12) Pair of plush children's toys recalled due to choking hazard
<http://www.ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/pair-of-plush-children-s-toys-recalled-due-to-choking-hazard-1.3642962>
- 13) How LEGO turned toys into a blockbuster movie empire
<http://www.wired.co.uk/article/lego-ninjago-movie-simon-lucas>
- 14) Top of the Toys: Do top toy lists hurt the industry?
<http://www.toynews-online.biz/opinion/read/top-of-the-toys-do-top-toy-lists-hurt-the-industry/049365>
- 15) Pink, Play And Power: Gender stereotypes and toys
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/vanessa-rogers/pink-play-power-gender-st_b_18202974.html
- 16) Major Toylers: 15 times a toy spoiled a Superhero movie
<http://www.cbr.com/toys-that-spoiled-a-superhero-movie/>
- 17) Your old Star Wars toys could be worth thousands
<https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/old-star-wars-toys-worth-thousands-084703261.html>
- 18) 9-year-old collecting toys to re-stock hospital's 'toy closet'
<http://www.kmov.com/story/36642478/9-year-old-collecting-toys-to-re-stock-hospitals-toy-closet>
- 19) Toymakers are targeting your children via YouTube's Kid Influencers
<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-10-18/toymakers-curry-favor-with-precocious-youtube-influencers>
- 20) The childhood friends who created the Hatchimals toys that ruled last year are now billionaires
<http://uk.businessinsider.com/hatchimals-founders-are-billionaires-2017-10?r=US&IR=T>



ITRA 2017 Fees Notice

Please note that, according to the ITRA Board's decision in Alicante, 8th August 2005, conference fees cover ITRA membership fees until the following conference. This means that conference participants who paid full registration fees for the 7th ITRA conference in Braga, Portugal 2014 have been exempted from paying ITRA dues for the years 2015 through 2017.

If you were not able to attend the conference in Braga, you must submit your annual membership fee for 2017 to remain an ITRA member in good standing.

Annual membership: €50
Retiree// Student membership: €25

Payments may be made

a) through bank transfer to the following account number

International Toy Research Association,
National Bank of Greece, Pal. Phaliro branch 175
Account number: 175/480074.53
IBAN Number: GR16 0110 1750 0000 1754 8007 453
SWIFT: ETHNGRAA

b) by sending an International Money Order, payable to ITRA, to the Treasurer at the following address:

Cleo Gougoulis
73 Terpsihoris St.
P.Phaleron
17562 Athens
Greece

Please notify the ITRA Treasurer, Cleo Gougoulis, by sending an e-mail to: cleogougoulis@yahoo.gr, when you send your fees to the bank. It is important to mention what amount and in which currency you paid.

EPILOGUE

If you attended a conference this year - toy related, preferably - have anything to say, whether about yourself, publications you have read or would like to recommend to the ITRA membership, events, research or just anything, or would like to propose an ITRA member we could profile, do not hesitate to contact either Suzy or Mark, via itranwsltr@gmail.com. We intend to publish a winter edition in December 2017. This edition will contain a updates for the upcoming ITRA conference in Paris, and all pertinent logistic material related to the conference. In the meantime, the editors of the newsletter would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue of the ITRA newsletter.

We would encourage you to feel free to send the editors articles, which we can share with the rest of the ITRA members. If English is not your first language, please do not let this be a hindrance to contacting the Editorial Team; we are more than happy to assist in editing items from contributors.

Regards
Suzy & Mark

We do not stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)