

News Release

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***kid size* examines the trends and traditions of adults designing for children**

Pittsburgh, PA...Children live in a world designed by adults. *kid size: The Material World of Childhood*, on view at Carnegie Museum of Art, April 30 through September 11, 2005, examines changes in children's design over the past 300 years. The exhibition, which includes more than 130 everyday objects designed for children from different cultures and time periods, combines traditional displays with spotlighted design moments and hands-on activities to help visitors find links in the way adults across cultures have met the needs of children.

Organized by the Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany, the exhibition is a study in both children's design and adult attitudes toward children. "In exploring these objects, we can see how the perception of the child's world changes over time," says Elisabeth Agro, Carnegie Museum of Art assistant curator of decorative arts, and organizer of the Pittsburgh presentation. "It also helps us consider what current design expresses about how we view childhood today."

kid size features objects divided into six themes based on specific childhood needs: play, mobility, patterns of sleep, basic functions, learning, and seating. Within each of these sections, design moments highlight objects that show a change in traditional ways of thinking, such as the 1970's *Big Wheel*, the first plastic-formed pedal toy.

The show strives to help adults re-experience the wonders of childhood in a place where children will feel at home. To this end, the exhibition's presentation is meant to be as much a part of the experience as the pieces on view. Exhibition designers Anne Mundell, associate professor of drama at Carnegie Mellon University, and Dale McNutt, of Soho Invention, Inc., have created a playful and imaginative environment that imitates a child's world of fantasy and reality.



Each of the six sections conveys an atmosphere suggested by its theme and presents the objects and the design moments in an area that evokes the colors, shapes, sounds, and sensations of childhood. Integral to each section is a hands-on activity, which, according to Marilyn Russell, the museum's curator of education, makes the exhibition engaging for visitors of all ages. "Kids will get to experience objects from their perspective, and adults participating alongside can enjoy nostalgic childhood memories," says Russell.

I Won't Grow Up!

Objects for children are enhanced by designs that stimulate creativity, improve motor skills, educate, and entertain. But whatever their purpose, to keep a child's attention they must also have a fun factor, evident in many pieces in this section. Charles and Ray Eames' *Mechanical Walking Horse* (1944), for example, offers a playful and inviting appearance in its simple structure of wooden blocks and metal braces. Other items, such as the German-made *Toy Store* (c. 1950), a play-area re-creation of a small market counter, blend imagination and realism to present concepts and objects from the adult world in ways that children can understand. The activity area features a variety of rocking toys for children to try out.

Oh, the Places You'll Go!

Children require transportation until they are old enough to move on their own. From the stereotypical baby stroller, such as the Silver Cross Pram (c. 1930), to a 1950's egg-shaped German perambulator complete with chrome fenders and bumper, designers have universally come to recognize that these items must be fully mobile, while stressing safety and comfort. Highlighted in this section are several different fabric sling designs, such as the *Campa-Ashaninka Wide Baby Sling* (1950), a Peruvian carrier made of cotton and bone. Visitors are invited to try on slings and carry around special gallery baby dolls to get a better understanding of their simplicity and continued appeal. An additional writing and drawing activity provides the opportunity for participants to imagine travel adventures using the modes of transportation on display.

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod

A proper sleeping arrangement is key to the well-being and demeanor of a child, likewise the contentment of adults. Basic sleeping mats and stylish cradle designs, such as the 1880's bent wood cradle by Thonet Brothers, are designed for their occupant to have a good night's rest. This section includes a variety of sleep-related objects, as well as an activity area filled with

pillows and books for visitors to engage in bedtime story reading, a common childhood ritual. An additional activity area lets visitors personalize model cribs.

Eating Curds and Whey

Eating, grooming, and toilet training are necessities all children must learn at some time. Particularly evident in this section is how convenience and practicality often outweighed safety in design, like the 1870's wooden bathtub with wheels which, while fully mobile, would seem to require a third hand to keep it steady while the other two hands attend to a wriggling, wet baby. Visitors are invited to try out this section's design moment, the *Tripp Trapp Chair* (1973), a seat that is adjustable to grow with the child.

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

In the 19th century, the rise of formal education created the need for a new learning environment. Planned lessons and structured classroom settings called for rows of functional and non-distracting desks and chairs. This section includes several traditional desks, as well as more modern designs, like the slanted, adjustable *Buricito Desk* (1994), created to respond to new learning methods. This section's activity focuses on learning games, and, combined with the chair section, also contains projects focusing on chair design.

Who's Been Sitting in My Chair?

Early chairs for children were simply small versions of their adult counterparts, such as the child's size Shaker Rocking Chair (c. 1875), or the Louis XV child's armchair (c. 1750). More recently, designers have aimed at creating playful chairs specifically for children, such as the egg-inspired *Eggroll Chair* from Tarantino Studio, and the bird-shaped *Tipi Chair* by Eero Aarnio.

Programs

The exhibition includes a studio gallery hosting creative design workshops for children and adults. The studio is open to parents and children on weekends, and for pre-arranged group activity during the week. Throughout the summer, experts in childhood topics will conduct informal gallery discussions, including a children's librarian, a pediatrician, an early childhood educator, and a designer of objects for children.

Support

kid size: The Material World of Childhood is an exhibition of the Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany.

Generous support for the exhibition's presentation in Pittsburgh has been provided by members of the Associates of Carnegie Museum of Art, Eat'n Park Restaurants, and Parkhurst Dining Services. General support for the museum's exhibition program is provided by The Heinz Endowments and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and Allegheny Regional Asset District (ARAD).

Photos are available on Carnegie Museum of Art's media photo website. Contact the communication office at 412.688.8690 for the access code.

A variety of related programs including tours and lectures are available at www.cmoa.org.

Carnegie Museum of Art

Located at 4400 Forbes Avenue in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh and founded by industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1895, Carnegie Museum of Art is nationally and internationally recognized for its distinguished collection of American and European works of art from the 16th century to the present. The Heinz Architectural Center, part of Carnegie Museum of Art, is dedicated to the collection, study, and exhibition of architectural drawings and models. For more information about Carnegie Museum of Art, call 412.622.3131 or visit our web site at www.cmoa.org.

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