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MY TEDDY BEAR

4 December 2024 › 22 June 2025

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MUSÉE DES ARTS
DÉCORATIFS

1. Of bears and men
2. The Fallen King of Animals
3. The Birth of the teddy bear
4. An immediate success
5. Fiction bears
6. From teddy bear to comforter
7. The teddy bear today: the symbol
8. The «Boudoir Peluchoir» by Charlemagne Palestine
9. The teddy bear today: between childhood and nostalgia
10. Bears tomorrow
11. The tactile forest

9	8
10	7
	6
	5
3	4
1	2

For the comfort and accessibility of all, folding seats, wheelchairs, magnetic induction loops, baby carriers, and changing tables are available on level -1 near the cloakrooms.

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**WELCOME
TO THE MUSÉE
DES ARTS
DÉCORATIFS
AND THE
EXHIBITION 'MY
TEDDY BEAR'.**

ENJOY YOUR VISIT!

The immense popularity of the teddy bear, present in all children's bedrooms, hides a paradox: how did this fierce and wild animal, once the king of beasts revered for its fighting abilities, become the universal symbol of childhood, as well as tenderness, softness, and comfort?

While many toys (rattles, dolls, pull-along toys, board games etc.) date back to Antiquity, the teddy bear is a relatively recent invention, contrary to what its fame might suggest. It was created simultaneously in Germany and the United States at the very beginning of the 20th century, under the auspices of a toy manufacturer and a President of the United States.

In the Anglo-Saxon world, the toy was named teddy bear (*teddybär* in German) in reference to President Theodore Roosevelt, whilst its French name maintains a connection to the material that it's made from, plush. Often compared to velvet, this fabric is less thick and is characterized by its long silky hairs. Reminiscent of fur, this softness is essential because it awakens the sense of touch. The teddy bear is in fact the first toy that could be cuddled and squeezed in one's arms, which explains why it immediately became a companion and friend to children. This success also highlights society's awareness of the specific needs of childhood.

1. OF BEARS AND MEN

Archaeological remains suggest a deep relationship between humans and bears since prehistoric times, sharing many common points, such as standing upright, an omnivorous diet or plantigrade, in other words, placing the entire sole of the foot on the ground when walking. We even lived in the same caves! This long cohabitation explains the cultural importance of the bear, which occupies a place in our imagination that no other animal can dispute.

Prehistoric representations of the bear are relatively rare, but they share fundamental characteristics that make bears identifiable, including for us today: the round and massive silhouette, the huge head, and especially the ears, round and proudly set on the top of the head, decisive for distinguishing the bear from other animals such as felines.

2. THE FALLEN KING OF ANIMALS

Peoples of Antiquity venerated the bear and its formidable fighting abilities during cults that Catholicism in the early Middle Ages had difficulty eradicating. The biological specificities that bring it closer to human beings allow identification, favoring the development of these bear cults, which will then persist in the form of myths and legends.

In the Middle Ages, the Church tried to erase the most spectacular aspects of the bear, the root of pagan worship that could turn people away from Catholicism. From being the king of animals, the bear is gradually and systematically humiliated, linked to the devil and his many sins: gluttony, laziness, anger or even lust.

Bear hunting, once a rite allowing one to appropriate the power of the animal, remains dangerous but becomes less prestigious. The deer replaced the bear as king of the forest and the lion as the king of animals. Easy to tame and train, the bear becomes a circus beast, exhibited close up in the center of towns and cities.

Charles Lévy
Poster *Tous les soirs. Cirque d'Hiver.*
Les ours sibériens.
Paris, undated
Colour lithograph on paper
© Les Arts Décoratifs

right page:
Teddy bear
ca. 1910-1912 Mohair plush; shaved muzzle;
felt underpaws
Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, donated
by Danièle Giraudy, 1994
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière



3. THE BIRTH OF THE TEDDY BEAR



While many toys have their roots in Antiquity (rattles, dolls, pull-along toys, board games, etc.), the teddy bear, contrary to what its immense success might suggest, is a relatively recent toy. It was born in 1902, simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Germany, the toy brand Steiff, who already made many fabric animals, launched a new toy, an articulated mohair bear.

In the United States, President Theodore Roosevelt saved a bear from hunting. This gesture, unusual for the time, was widely commented on, and became a sort of Rooseveltian legend, which inspired the creation of fabric toys in the shape of bears. The success of this story, linked to the president's strong popularity, fueled demand for bears imported from Germany, and gave the toy its English name, the teddy bear.

4. AN IMMEDIATE SUCCESS

The bear is not an animal like any other, and the teddy bear is not a toy like any other! It was an immediate success, and in about ten years it became an essential toy, in the United States and Germany, but also in France and the United Kingdom. Its solidity and safety are major assets and make it a gift of choice for the little ones.

For children it fulfills a new role, that of friend and companion. This new emotional bond between children and their toys can be explained by the evolution of their place in society at the beginning of the 20th century, when their needs and specificities began to be better understood and respected.

Articulated and easily manipulated, the teddy bear is ready for cuddles, like a kind of doll for boys and girls, but freed from the imitation of the maternal role inherent in dolls.

The hegemony of the first German brands is undeniable, through their exports and the influence they have on the production of other countries. But after World War I, German toys were less sought after, and French manufacturers, such as Pintel or FADAP, or British ones, such as Merrythought, became more prominent. Since French brands had little experience, and designers and workers often changed factories, French bears of this period are less sophisticated and all have a family resemblance. In the 1920s and 1930s, the teddy bear underwent major changes. The eyes made of boot buttons, compressed wood pulp, transform to glass. The stuffing made of wood straw gives way to kapok, lighter and softer. The colors multiply and move away from those of real bears, two-tone mohairs or rayon fabric of various colors. While the claws, noses and mouths remain hand-sewn, smiles appear on the bears' faces making them less realistic and more childish, in a word, cuter.



5. FICTION BEARS

Able to stand upright and imitate human gestures, the bear is the ideal anthropomorphic fictional animal. The appearance of the teddy bear at the beginning of the 20th century erased the most frightening aspects of the animal, allowing a rapid increase in the number of bear characters in children's literature, particularly from the 1920s, with the famous Winnie the Pooh.

Whether living in a world of bears or evolving among humans, most bear heroes are similar to teddy bears and depicted as round and soft, quite different from its natural form.

6. FROM TEDDY BEAR TO COMFORTER

In the years following the Second World War, Donald Woods Winnicott, an influential child psychiatrist, theorized transitional phenomena and objects. In order to accept reality, thus to manage the tension between their inner reality and the outer reality, individuals use an intermediate zone as a buffer between their subjectivity and their objective perceptions in which transitional phenomena intervene, such as art, religion, and first and foremost: play. Play is thus an imaginary area necessary for the child to build a relationship with the world. In order to play, they need physical objects that are part of the outer reality, often the thumb or the fist first, then soft things like a stuffed animal or the corner of a blanket, and finally dolls or hard toys. The transitional object is the one that the child finds and employs at this stage of his development, the famous comforter.

Throughout the 20th century, the teddy bear evolves in order to adapt to its status as a favorite childhood companion. In the early 1950s, teddy bears are still very similar to those of the pre-war period, in the materials and construction. Changes can be seen in their expression, more smiley and more friendly. In the 1960s, the color palette expanded and soft and gentle artificial materials made it easier for children to hold and cuddle, all the while being washable and fireproof in order to comply with increasingly strict hygiene and safety standards. Ever plumper, ever softer, and adorned with bright colors absent in their natural habitat, perfect for awakening children's senses, or pastel to decorate their room, the teddy bear reigns over a veritable menagerie, and is now adorned with the aura of the comforter.

7. THE TEDDY BEAR TODAY: THE SYMBOL

A friend to children since its creation, the teddy bear can slip into the role of a double and become a substitute for children to express, in images, the gravity of a situation. A frequent image of war, but one which never loses its power, is of a teddy bear in the rubble of a destroyed city. The toy embodies the reality of the conflict and the threat it poses to children.

Stuffed animals, often placed on the scenes of road accidents, during local sympathy marches when a child disappears, or in front of the home of a deceased personality, are thus intimately linked to memory and remembrance.

As a universal symbol of childhood, today the teddy Bear is more than a toy, and can be used as an educational tool, or as a means of communicating with children. It helps them to project their complicated situations onto the toy, particularly when in hospital.

teddy bear friends help children to project themselves into complicated situations, or into trials that may await them, when it comes to putting on a gas mask during a war, or a respiratory mask during a pandemic. It can also simply comfort them, for example in a hospital or on a fire truck. Finally, teddy bears are marketed to support children's aid associations.

Mass-produced in a globalized market and sold at very low prices, the stuffed toy is a victim of overconsumption. The multiplicity of plastic materials used for its manufacture, as well as the strict standards imposed on toys, make its recovery through recycling very difficult. If the stuffed toy is not lucky enough to be preserved, it often ends its life in the incinerator. Manufacturers are striving to produce ethically and sustainably in France or in Europe, and are considering the use of different materials, such as recycled plastic, hemp or linen.





Articulated bear
France, ca.1935
Cotton; plastic eyes; embroidered snout and paws
Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, purchased in 1987
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière

8. THE TEDDY BEAR TODAY: BETWEEN CHILDHOOD AND NOSTALGIA

The teddy bear is experiencing a turning point in its history: while children are turning away from their toys earlier in favor of digital entertainment, more and more adults are keeping their cuddly toys. While it was unthinkable to imagine an adult with toys, collectors or eccentrics exempted, in the 20th century, today's young adults no longer want to abandon their childhood companions whose benefits on mental health are now well known. The acceptance of this idea allows teddy bears to take their place in the public sphere and in our daily lives.



Patrick Lavoix for Christian Dior Homme
Teddy bear, 1994
Velvet, synthetic fibres, plastic, cotton, silk, wool,
metal and glass
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière

Fashion houses & brands are catching on and transforming it into a fun fetish. Humorous and offbeat teddy bears are designed for adults, sometimes as accessories that take the shape or form of the famous cuddly toy. Cultivating one's inner child means letting one's spontaneity or creativity speak, where previous eras only saw childishness.

Some artists use stuffed animals as the basis of their artistic practice, such as Charlemagne Palestine, who has installed his Boudoir Peluchoir in the exhibition.

9. BEARS TOMORROW

From the fierce king of the animal kingdom and half-god, the bear (and especially its polar version) is today the symbol of climate change and endangered nature. In their downsized and threatened natural habitat, bears must find new food resources which draws them closer to human habitations and questions the separation between our two worlds. Programs that aim to maintain the species, such as the bear reintroduction in the Pyrenees, are subject to controversy sometimes settled by intervening teddy bears (similar to when teddy bears were laid in front of the Ariège prefecture in June 2020 after a bear was shot). Similarly, the use of the teddy bear in fashion, such as the work of Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, could seem like a comic diversion, but also represents an act of militancy: refusing the use of fur.

DISCOVER THE EXHIBITION IN A DIFFERENT WAY: ACTIVITIES

INDIVIDUALS

GUIDED TOUR ADULTS

Thursdays 6:30 - 8:00 PM
Fridays 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM
Saturdays 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM,
2:00 - 3:30 PM, 4:00 - 5:30 PM

WORKSHOP AGES 4-6, 7-10 AND FAMILY

My Little teddy bear

After visiting the exhibition, you can make your own miniature bear out of wool felt. Whether cheerful or grumpy, this pocket-sized teddy bear is a great storyteller to take with you on maxi adventures.

Wednesdays 2:30 - 4:30 PM

Tuesday to Friday during school
holidays, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM
and/or 2:30 - 4:30 PM

FASHION WORKSHOP AGES 7-10

Bears on stage

From the forest to the ice floe and from the circus to the child's bedroom, all the lives of the bear are told during the visit to the exhibition. In four workshops, the children create a diorama, children create a diorama, a small paper theatre featuring the bear and its environment.

Four sessions of 2h30, Tuesday to Friday
during school holidays.

LECTURES

Lecture by Michel Pastoureau (in French only).
Thursday 23 January 2025
from 6:30 PM to 8 PM.

Lecture by Benoît Piéron (in French only).
Thursday 15 May from 6:30 PM to 8 PM.

GROUPS

Guided tours and workshops are available (in French or in English) to schools, activity centres, écoles supérieures, universities, associations and companies at the date and time of their choice.

to book a guided tour
reservation@madparis.fr
+33 (0) 1 44 55 57 66

DRAMATIZED EXPLORATION KINDERGARTEN

In the footsteps of the bear

From ferocious animal to cuddly toy, the tour invites you to discover the fabulous history of the bear through the ages. A walk punctuated by tour props, rhymes and the manipulation of materials.

You are looking for a time slot for your group tour (with no guided tour): book a self-guided group ticket at www.billetterie.madparis.fr.

**Scan this code to find all the information
about the exhibition and to book
activities:**



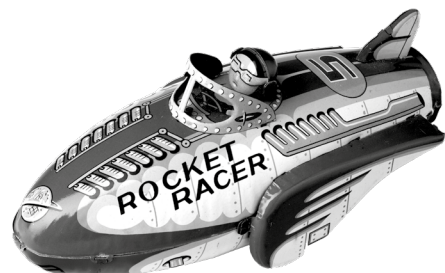
TOYS AT THE MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

Ever since it opened, the museum has acquired and presented toys, revealing their aesthetic value and cultural and social significance. With more than 15 000 objets – plush, wooden or plastic animals, dolls and their houses, miniature transport vehicles, rocking toys, board games, toys for toddlers, puzzles, spinning tops, etc. – this collection reflects the evolution of the child's place in society.

The museum holds the most popular toys from the late 18th century to the present day, as well as exceptional pieces, royal board games, precious rattles, dolls dressed by Jeanne Lanvin, or games by designer, such as Enzo Mari or Ray and Charles Eames.

Today, toys are at a turning point in their history, between new technologies and a return to natural materials, and must overcome major social challenges, as evidenced by the latest works acquired: a recycled plastic truck, a feminist board game, or a Barbie doll whose skin colour is now available in 22 shades.

Find a selection of toys on levels 3 and 6 of the Modern and contemporary collections.



Super Sonic Speedster
Masudaya Modern Toys
Japan, ca. 1965
Sheet metal
Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière



Rattle, 19th century
Embossed and engraved silver,
mother-of-pearl handle
© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance

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ENTIRE MUSEUM,
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MOST OF IT AND
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Les Arts Décoratifs is a non-profit association that brings together the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the Musée Nissim de Camondo and the Camondo School, the Ateliers du Carrousel and the library.

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For further information please contact us at +33 (0)1 44 55 59 78 or at mecenat@madparis.fr.

SOLO / DUO CARD

The SOLO or DUO pass is valid for one year and gives you unlimited priority access to the temporary exhibitions and permanent collections of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs for one or two people.

For more information, visit madparis.fr

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

Available at the bookstore-boutique.
Published by Les Arts Décoratifs
144 pages, 125 illustrations
32 €



#Expo_OursPeluche

curator: Anne Monier Vanryb
assisted by Marie-Lou Canovas
scenography: Marion Golmard
graphic design: Sylvain Reymondon

MUSÉE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

107 rue de Rivoli – 75001 Paris

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late night Thursday 6 – 9 PM

tickets on madparis.fr

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open daily from noon to 2 PM
and from 7 PM to 11 PM

With the support of the International Committee, Andrew J. Martin-Weber and Beejan Land for The Divine Charlotte.
Special thanks to Margarete Steiff GmbH for their support and the pieces loaned for the exhibition.


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