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Catalogue

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## **Town Venue**

Collective Collaborations Gallery  
Unit SU3A, Market Walk  
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Northampton NN1 2DP

June 8th - June 29th 2013  
Daily Wed-Saturday

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28th October - 15th November 2013

## **Symposium**

School of the Arts  
Saturday 2nd November 2013

# Introduction

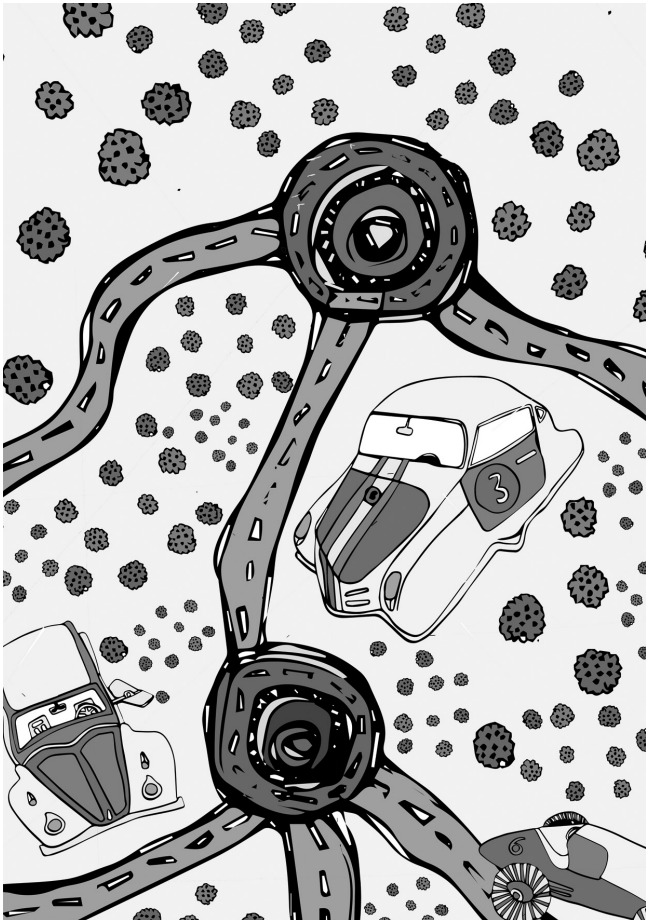
We all play. We all toy with things. People make a time for play in all cultures.

There are many definitions in the English language of the word 'play'. It is used in a variety of ways; for example, it describes what we do when we take part in games and sport, make music, or role-play in theatre. This exhibition focuses on the benefits of play for creativity and toy design. It explores how individuals and organisations have seen play as good for themselves and their communities.

**1. 1000-piece Jigsaw Puzzle - Children's Games 1560** by Pieter Brugel The Elder (1525-1569) Produced by Anness Publishing Ltd. Stamped card board. Chosen to illustrate that play and toy are nothing new.

**2. London Underground Poster 1964** - designed by theatre set designer Thomas Osborne Robinson (1904- 1976) to advertise Pollock Toy Museum. It also represent areas of play, music and performance not covered by this exhibition in detail.

**3. Boy's Own Cabinet - Three Hundred Things a Bright Boy Can Do, (1914)** The Children's Paper (1919), Boy's Own Papers (1908 + 1919), Animal Life Pop- Up Book, Railway Marvels, Modern Wonders for Boys, The Romance of Animal Craft (1907), Tales Told in the Nursery. Tower/Dixon's Plastic Diver and Alpha Beta Set, made by Tresco both based in Earls Barton.



# Toy Stories

Before 1900 Victorian factory owners encouraged sports teams and brass bands. Organised play was seen as beneficial to their employees.

Innovators in the East Midlands, took up toy design and production using new materials and manufacturing processes. They appreciated the value of engineering and design, combining craft skills and processes to produce traditional toy designs in new ways; die-stamping jigsaws, rotary moulding dolls and die-casting toy cars. The British toy trade remains focused in the region.

1. **Wenman Bassett-Lowke** - was a man of great energy and charisma, he took an interest in architecture and design, in town planning and social welfare, in theatre and photography. He appreciated the values of good design in industry and modern methods of production, believing that similar principles should be applied to people's homes and towns.

In 1916 Bassett-Lowke purchased a modest terraced house in Derngate and commissioned the remarkable Scottish architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh to transform it into a house of unique charm and international importance.

In 1924, when he was looking for his second home, he found inspiration in a copy of a German publication, the *Werkbund Jahrbuch*. There he found designs by Peter Behrens who was Head of the school of Modern Architecture in Vienna. Bassett-Lowke commissioned him to design his second home *New Ways*, to which he moved in 1926.

He always wanted others to share his enthusiasms and benefit from good ideas. In the 1900s he gave lectures illustrated by lantern slides; by the 1930s he was giving radio broadcasts, by the late 1940s he was appearing on television. He was thoroughly modern man of international outlook.

Despite his incessant travel, Bassett-Lowke never thought of leaving Northampton. His work on the council gave him most opportunity to influence town matters including the building of an Art Deco Swimming Baths on The Mounts.

2. **Bassett-Lowke Cabinet** - contains products and catalogues produced by the company. These include a boat with a wind up mechanism, a miniature canon, a later train model produced named after the Prince of Wales. Additional samples can be found in the shed demonstrating the world of today's train enthusiasts. These include a Trix train set which were produced at a much smaller scale than the initial model engines that carried passengers and crew.

**3. Bassett-Lowke Ltd - Northampton** - Wenman Joseph Bassett-Lowke (1877 – 1953) was a man of vision, who could draw out the talents of others. Setting up his model engineering business in 1898 at the age of 21 under the wing of his father's boiler making firm in Northampton, he drew on the skills of craftsmen here and in Germany. Early travel to the continent opened his eyes to modern styles.

Over the next 50 years the name Bassett-Lowke Ltd was associated with model making of the highest quality, ranging from 00 gauge toy trains to enormous showpieces of cruise liners. Intricate prototype engineering models and exquisite architectural maquettes poured from the workshops of Bassett-Lowke Ltd. Beginning with a mail order catalogue for model engineering fittings, Bassett-Lowke was able to open his first London shop in High Holborn in 1908. Many were the noses of boys, young and old, which pressed against the windows of this elegantly fitted-out shop and through its doors passed many notable personages, all intent on spending their pocket money on marvellous models. The company attended international exhibitions at home and on the continent, and commissions for rail and ship models came in from as far away as the USA and India.

Great importance was attached to design and publicity. His catalogues had striking covers designed by well-known draughtsman and he even commissioned Charles Rennie Mackintosh to design three small advertising stamps.

**3. Annotated Map of British Isles** - this map is to show the large number of toys and play firms that are based in the East Midlands. Manufacturing grew in the twentieth century drawing on the skills developed for the engineering and leather industries. Innovators adapted them for toy production.

We plan to gather more stories about the local industry and include the information about other firms involved in play in the second version of the exhibition. Were you or a family member involved? More recently toy design and distribution (as we shall see later in the exhibition) has been focused in the region.

**4. Mettoy, Rosebud Dolls and Burbank Cabinet** - Mettoy vehicles including a tinplate racing car and car with caravan. Die-cast James Bond Corgi Car in its original packaging. A Rosebud Doll produced for wholesale market and Barbie box (Mattel). Hot Wheels Toys and track produced at Burbank in Wellingborough, along with two Disney talking figures.



**5. Mettoy** - The company was started by Philip Ullman and Arthur Katz in 1933. They had toy trade experience in Germany but left with the help from British friends when it became difficult for Jewish people to run a business in Germany. They started producing metal toys in Northampton. During the war they worked on products for the Ministry of Supply and were encouraged to open a second factory in Fforestfach, Swansea Wales in 1949. In 1953 they launched Playcraft ranges using injection moulding and in 1955 they started Corgi die-cast cars with the distinctive plastic windows.

Design and development remained in Northampton. Marcel Van Cleemput, who died in April 2013, was their chief designer on the Corgi Brand between 1956-1983, when the company folded.

They had also started to produce plastics products. In 1958 they designed a special machine to produce Wembley Vinyl Footballs in Northampton marketed as 'the most versatile playball on the market' they were the same size as a regulation football and specified by many Local Education Authorities for use in schools.

**6. Rosebud Doll and Burbank Toys** - Eric Smith started Rosebud dolls at his father's firm as Nene Plastics in 1947. Northamptonshire firms like Rosebud and John Orme Ltd developed new rotary moulding processes for doll production, replacing the doll making craft traditions using wood, ceramics and textiles. Rosebud employed sculptors like Jack Morris to create master models for the vinyl heads, that could then be produced in one part. Plastic dolls have different benefits for example they are less precious and could be washed more easily.

John Orme Ltd went on to develop specialist plastic technologies and produced the Space Hopper for Mettoy in the 1970s.

In 1967, Nene Plastics was taken over by the American company Mattel. Rosebud dolls were available in various sizes and colours. The designers created difference dolls by eye colour, wigs and hand-drawn eyebrows. They also created fashionable outfits and using technology to create more life like behaviours. The company started trading independently again under the name Blossom Toys from 1974.

**7. Rosebud Dolls Photograph** - of the Fab Four (The Beatles) was taken on factory visit in c1964 by Windsor-Spice, for Mary Hillier's book on toys published in 1965. There is a film on show in the exhibition showing how these dolls were made in volume using rotary moulding machines, the hair was stitched on, faces spread. Mary Hillier comments the only hand work on the dolls were the painted eyebrows.

## Early Benefits

During the twentieth century not all designers were playing with new technology and new materials. The psychological theories of play and child development were influencing education and toy design.

A number of designers and campaigners and toy manufacturers actively promoted the benefits of play and 'good' toys for children at home and school.

They based their toy designs on research and created products that encouraged creativity and educational development.

**1. Hilary Page and Kiddicraft** - Hilary Page generated many of the key nursery designs such as nesting forms, stacking cups and most famously the "Lego" brick.

Kiddicraft possibly fell between two groups; the new technology innovators and the those promoting educational wooden toys. Jim and William Osborne argue that although he designed with an understanding of child psychology, his adoption of plastic for his nursery toys isolated him from those pushing for 'good' educational toys using wood.

His inability to adequately protect and exploit his patents globally meant that others were able to copy and build on his ideas. An understanding intellectual property and the resources to exploit your ideas before others do, has been key to the development of toy ranges be it Barbie or the Star Wars' merchandise. The stress of running Kiddicraft led to him take his own life in 1953.

**2. Hilary Page and Kiddicraft Cabinet** - displays a copy of his book along with examples his stacking cubes and sorting shapes dating from the late 1950s. An advice tube shows how he shared his research with retailers and parents by providing information at point of sale. There are also two boxes of his interlocking building blocks the precursors of Lego.

**3. Educational Time Line** - the benefits of play to learning and creativity have a long history. As with the history of toys, it is not possible to cover all the debates in an exhibition. But a time line of key developments provides the visitor with an overview.

**4. Paul and Marjorie Abbatt Ltd.** - They met in 1926 through the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry, a scout type organisation, but with an emphasis on traditional crafts and nature. They married in 1930 and planned to open a progressive school but travel in Europe led them to focus on educational toys. They started selling toys in 1932 employing artists like Freda Skinner to work on puzzles.





They started to collaborate with modernist designers like the Architect Erno Goldfinger and saw their work as part of the same functional and aesthetic ethos. Toys were to be designed “to encourage the use of child’s imagination and creativity”. The shop at 94 Wimpole Street but research continued.

After the war they continued their business and educational activities and in 1955 they employed Edward Newmark as a junior partner to manage their shop, this gave the more time for their research and activities such as the Children’s Play Activity Trust. As at start research and promoting their ideas about play went hand in hand. Later, in 1959 they collaborated on the setting up the International Council for Children’s Play with partners in Germany and Austria insuring the issues about the benefits of play were shared internationally.

**5. Abbatt Publications and Photographs** - Ken Garland worked on catalogues and advertisements for the Abbatts and some of his work for them is featured on these panels which all promote their ideas as well as their products.

**6. Abbatt and Galt Cabinet** - contains a range of products illustrated for Abbatt and Galt by Barbara Sampson. For Abbatt. This unusual triangular cat puzzle sold well in Japan. For Galt Toys, ‘The Royal Game of Goose’, Ladybird puzzle from ‘Animal Sixes’, writing paper & envelopes, ‘See Inside’ puzzle ‘Tea Time’, ‘My Alphabet Discovery Book’, ‘Naughts & Crosses’ and ‘Catch a Mouse’.

There is also Galt catalogue and an upside-down Face puzzle designed by Ken Garland and Associates for Galt in 1977.

7. **Barbara Sampson** - also worked for both Galt and Abbatt. Her artwork was commended in a competition that she entered as a student. This opened a door and her design ideas were taken up and put into production. She still has her original sketch books and some of the correspondence with both companies. At Galt Toys she worked closely with Edward Newmark in London and later visited their Cheadle offices. Her 'Snakes and Ladders' game was one of whole range of Galt products 'selected' by the Design Council, who awarded special tags to well-designed products.

8. **Snakes and Ladders Game** - a best seller for Galt illustrated by Barbara from studies at The Natural History Museum. In 1969 it was photographed for the Design Council slide collection which were used an exemplar of 'good' design.

9. **Edward Newmark** - and his wife set up a toy company Astu Studios just after the war in the 1940s. It was based near Chesham and they initial worked with local wood turners but increasingly imported wooden bespoke items from Scandinavia, East Germany and Poland. In 1975 they moved the business to Berkhamsted.

In 1955 he started to work for the Abbatts as a Junior partner, managing their Wimpole Street store. But in 1957 he fell out with Abbatts and took up an offer to help Galts to start their new toy company and manage their new shop and he worked there until his retirement in 1975. It is clear for the three designers working for Galt he was the one that inspired and guided them. He was also interested in the history of toys and supported the Pollock Toy Museum in London.

9. **James Galt & Company Limited** - Galt was founded in 1836 by James Galt in Manchester and was granted its first Royal Warrant by Queen Victoria in 1848.

In 1949 Post war expansion commenced with the formation of the Education Division with the addition of the Toy Division in 1961, which included a retail shop in Great Marlborough Street, London and a shopping by post service. Galt's second Royal Warrant was granted by HM Queen Elizabeth II 1966 and in 1990 Galt Toys was voted 'Best British Toy Company' by the British Association of Toy Retailers.

The ownership of the company may have changed but they have continued to provide quality toys to schools and the general public.

10. **Galt Toys** - samples from their ranges were selected to show they still sell classic wooden toys and designs the echo the classic designs of 20th century.

11. **Galt Toy Graphics** - Ken Garland has lent the exhibition a series of panels to illustrate his graphic and product design work for Galt and Abbatt. He set a high standard of graphics for the toy company. It was a flexible, playful approach that was to last twenty years.

12. **Ken Garland and Associates** - involvement went with the Galt company went beyond the graphics for stationery, advertisements and catalogues. They presented designs for toys and games, if they were asked by Galt to develop them further, they did so on royalty basis. These included a wooden toy train in 1963 and marble run. But these wooden products proved expensive. So the shift was made to designing games and puzzles using card. Connect was developed in 1968 with Robert Chapman. It did not use letters and numbers used colour and shapes. A version of the game is still in production by the German puzzle and games company Ravensberger. Other games followed Fizzog (1970), Trapsnap (1974), Anymals (1975) and three more.

13. **Ken Garland and Associates Chair** - designed an range of children's furniture to flat pack for multi-purpose spaces. A rise in the cost of marine plywood made it uneconomic so the plans were given to play groups instead.

14. **Roger Limbrick** - first began designing toys for James Galt by winning a wooden toy design competition in 1962 organised by Edward Newmark. Roger had designed a dolls house for his boys with an eye for collaborative play - the design suited Galt's education market as the house allowed access for a number of children on all four sides. Made from plywood, it could be slotted together ready for use, and could also be packed flat for economical storage and dispatch. Edward Newmark was a major influence as he encouraged new designers to work for James Galt and to sell their toys at the Galt Toy Shop in London's swinging Carnaby Street.

Roger subsequently designed a Ride-on-Truck for them, and then produced short runs of two of his designs, Interslot and House Bricks, which sold through the London shop.

Later, at the London College of Furniture Roger set up and ran a Higher Diploma Course on Play Equipment Design & Manufacture. This included a strong emphasis on research, design and development of play equipment for children with disabilities in collaboration with several London hospitals, and the Toy Libraries Association. He was also a key player in developing the Toy Making design modules for the City & Guilds Creative Studies courses, including acting as their Chief Examiner.

# Caring Connections

The therapeutic benefits of play were obvious to all at the Paralympic Games of 2012. Toys were produced by ex-servicemen in the Lord Robert's Workshops in the 1920s.

Playing is seen as beneficial for recovery of all kinds and to keep us healthy. Play is being used by market researchers to understand better the needs of the senior citizens, allowing users to communicate their own design solutions, through play activities.

Play and toys generate funds for many social enterprises and charities.

**1. Sue Ryder Care** - Links between the toy trade and education are clear in the early benefits section. But the exchanges continue, as play continues to stimulate learning creativity what ever your age or ability.

The Government is funding a scheme called Knowledge Transfer Partnerships encouraging research and experience to be transferred between education and industry at undergraduate and post-graduate level. Sue Ryder Care have a base in Northampton. They approached Randle Turner in the Design Research Group at The University of Northampton to help them design new exclusive products for their charity shops. They were selling imported off the shelf items but wanted their own ranges.

Stewart Betts was recruited as a postgraduate student and the Associate designer and the link between the University and the charity. The three year collaboration was very successful for all involved, increasing the charities funds, challenging undergraduates with linked projects and increasing research activity in the Design Department.

**2. Sue Ryder Fantasy Castle** - This product was an exclusive offer in the Daily Mail. It was designed by Stewart but produced in the China. It flat packs, so that shipping costs in terms of carbon footprint would be kept to a minimum. It proved an excellent case study for students on all the issues surrounding global production of toys.

Dolls houses remain an important part of the Sue Ryder collection and many are designed with adult collectors rather than children in mind.

**3. Sue Ryder Children's Animal Stools** - Small furniture was encouraged by the educationalist for schools. But small furniture is also useful in the home and Stewart designed a series of stools for the Charity and these are still sold in their shops and online.



**4. Royal London Hospital** - Young patients at Europe's newest hospital, The Royal London, are to benefit from two stunning new spaces - an outdoor sky garden a larger than life activity space. The spaces aim to provide young patients with a new healing environment, a world away from the hospital ward.

The million pound project is the result of a Royal Institute of British Architects competition to design two innovative play and garden spaces for the new Royal London's Children's Hospital that harness the healing power of art and play.

The activity space was funded by charitable donations from insurers OdysseyRe, Newline Group, Advent and Riverstone (all Fairfax companies) facilitated by Barts and The London Charity, and the outdoor space was funded by charitable donations from construction group Skanska.

Barts Health Children's Group Director, Jane Hawdon, said: "The Activity Space is a unique play concept, providing important respite from treatment and medical intervention, for children and their families".

Formally known as The Ann Riches Healing Space, the activity space has been designed by award-winning architects Cottrell and Vermeulen and designer Morag Myerscough, who worked together to create a uniquely vibrant, oversized living room, filled with Alice in Wonderland-scale objects.

To create the feeling of a living room the double height space has been fitted with an oversize skirting board and decorated with what appears to be a traditional wallpaper pattern, but upon closer inspection reveals itself as a hand-drawn menagerie of animals. The living room is furnished with familiar objects; a chair, a lamp, a TV, a globe, a rug and toys that occupy the space on a super size scale.

An enormous story telling chair sits in the middle of the room, beneath which patients can settle down and listen to a story. Hanging from the ceiling, a 4.5m diameter neon lampshade creates a disco space where interactive games are projected on the floor. The giant retro style television is so large that it allows young patients to 'get inside the TV' and enjoy the games room.

A reinterpretation of a traditional globe maps the boroughs of London. The inside of the globe can also be explored and used as a space to relax. A traditional style rug has been reworked as a pixelated pattern and printed digitally. Cleverly re-appropriated vibrant wooden tops and puzzle cubes form the seating in the space. The living room is inhabited by Eddie the Tiger and Twoo the Wise owl and their friends who have come from Cozy Wood. The adventures of Eddie and his friends are narrated under the storytelling chair. 'Twoo' the wise owl perches on the oversized chair whilst 'Eddie' the gentle giant tiger lounges in front of the massive TV. The young patients can sit on Eddie and play with pioneering interactive games designed by digital art wizard Chris O'Shea on the giant TV screen.

The other space is the new children's Sky Garden, also designed by Cottrell and Vermeulen. A rooftop forest features a tepee, a sky forest and tree house with a wildlife sound installation by acclaimed BBC wildlife recordist Chris Watson, all under a sculptural canopy.

The Sky Garden has expansive views over the whole of east London and beyond. For the first time patients and families will have access to a beautifully designed outdoor space and the powerful healing properties of nature, fresh air and the opportunity to 'be somewhere else'.

Play specialists, teachers, occupational and physiotherapists will use the garden to enhance the treatment of young patients.



**6. Jessie Eckel for Unicef** - This international charity working to improve the lives of children internationally, also use British designers to create ranges for them. Jessie Eckel an illustrator working with Vicki Thomas Associates, worked with the charity on a small collection of wooden toys to be sold through their gift catalogues. Included in the exhibition is a simple shapes sorting box and two jigsaws in printed calico sacks with sea themes.

Jessie also works in publishing and she has created a whole series of illustrations for Michael O'Mara's activity books. Here paper doll book has been included in the exhibition.

**7. Puzzles and Games** In recent years there has been more research into the benefits of play for the elderly and infirm, particularly those with memory loss. Board Games producers like The Green Board Company have started to produce games to meet this demand. W F Graham a local publisher of activity packs for children now produces a wider collection of products in a large print formats. 'Brain training' has become the short hand term for these sorts of toys and games the educational benefits of play continue to be promoted.

**8. Galt Toys and Unicef Toys** - In this section of the exhibition we have also included games and toys produced by Galt for wider age groups in particular those based on the work of Roger Limbrick and Ken Garland; the First Octons and Super Marble run.

Roger's work at the London College of Furniture in developing design for disability courses and toy courses, provided a training that was not available elsewhere. The specialist toy course was closed when the focus was more on degree provision but its staff and alumni are still active in toy design and craft production. Some like Roma Lear with a particular interest and expertise on the design of toys for disabled children.

The Unicef wooden puzzles and sorting box illustrated by Jessie Eckel have been included in Early Benefits area.

# Design Futures

The Design Research Group teach undergraduate courses in illustration, game, product and interior design. They often choose to brief students to design for play because toys make students:-

- Consider the needs of the next generation
- Explore materials and technology
- Think about health and safety issues
- Tackle the environmental and ethical issues of global production
- Value the role of intellectual property and licensing.

Most importantly these projects encourage creativity.

**1. Stewart Betts** - still finds it beneficial to work with staff and students at the University. As a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Associate, he was part of the Design Research Group and the collaboration continues in his new role at John Crane Toys.

He has worked with undergraduates on two projects with undergraduates. In design education, the engagement with commerce through “live design projects” is generally encouraged; whilst they are student assignments (not textbook exercises) they are also linked to real clients from business or from the local community. The outcomes from these projects may or not go into production, however, the students gain valuable experience in dealing with real design problems, including access to production processes and feedback from marketing teams and sales staff. This kind of two-way support may be a model to understanding and engaging with a variety of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to offer their support quick, flexible and responsive to their needs, whether through consultancy services or training and placing workforce. One of the live projects Stewart challenged the with involved designing a 1920s dolls house for the Sue Ryder range which involved interior and product design students.

He is currently developing and launching new ranges of wooden toys for John Crane, especially for their new Tidlo range. He also works on briefs from major buyers like those at John Lewis developing exclusive ranges for their stores.

Whilst at Sue Ryder he was involved in a different type of play designing guitars to sell in their own stores and on-line and appealing to adult players rather than children.

**2. Tidlington Dolls House** - is a new product designed Stewart for John Crane and we have included some design drawings and product information pictures. The importance on allowing children to play together continues in dolls’ house design.

**3. Tidlo Pram** - Stewart has designed a wooden pram that can be used in a variety of different ways. There are design drawings and a pram on show for visitors to try. DKL have lent a doll from their Corelle collection. Both firms distribute toys from premises in Northampton.

**4. John Crane Ltd** - Vicki Thomas approached John Crane at Toy Fair just before he retired and was in the process for handing over to a new Managing Director Jonathan Thorpe. She was interested in the new materials they had on show combining rubber and wood together in layers. Realising they were based in Northampton she suggested they consider working with the University.

The outcome has been a series of live projects and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. When Stewart Betts joined for Sue Ryder the collaboration has continued and strengthened. This exhibition with its focus on the Significance of the local toy trade has grown out of their work together.

The company designs and supplies quality wooden toys like a distinctive animal shape sorter, play vegetables and the easel. They also distribute other ranges which complement their core activities such as textile baby toys, which add a variety of textures to stimulate infants. Sound is also important and the exhibition includes a novel toy guitar in the form a hound dog. Quality toys can be produced in a wide range of materials.

**5. Explorer Vehicle** - this toy was designed by Daniel Screen as part of a live project with John Crane Ltd. The photographs in the John Crane window frame show the studio presentation by the second year product design group to Jonathan Thorpe and John Crane before he left the company.

The explorer vehicle toy was created to allow children to explore all sorts of terrain in their imagination deserts or the Antarctic. It seem more relevant now with a similar convoy actually travelling to the South Pole.



6. **Kids Cribs** - The Design Department has been actively involved in numerous KTP projects, which have benefitted local industry. Including three recently that were play related. All embedded a new design capability into the organisations. For charitable organization, 'Sue Ryder Care' the benefits were not just in sales but the income generated was used for palliative care.

In addition to the highly successful government funded KTP scheme, live projects and final year projects briefs are encouraged. Especially those that attempt to support a traditional and local manufacturing company, typical and historical to the local economy. The design brief is developed in conjunction with the senior management of the company, to harness existing manufacturing capability but with a new and innovative product range. Past projects include the Kids Cribs (shown here), play ground equipment, swimming pool toys, children's nursery furniture, specialist play desks for those with Asberger Syndrome. Several graduates have gone on to work for playground equipment firms in the region.

7. **Design Research Group Poster** - a sub-group made up of Vicki Thomas, Friedemann Schaber, Randle Turner, Derek Attenburrow and have been researching and contributing to the discussion on the role of knowledge transfer in the global marketplace. They have also learning from the practical experience of acting as supervisors and working with industry on KTP and understanding benefits and negative aspects for all the partners involved. Conference participation and publications are the routine ways that academics share knowledge. In this case a workshop was organised allowing those involved to share the relevance of their research to teaching design and map out best practice and develop networks within the academic system. This event led to a trip to visit a University in the Ural mountains of Russia.

They belong to international toy research organisations and have links with research being under taken in USA, Turkey, Spain, Germany and Hong Kong. In conclusion the researchers attempt to provide the international context of industry-academy collaboration in new product development for play.

# Global Well-being

Today, play is seen as vital for our health and well-being. Play England and the British Toy and Hobby Association are promoting the benefits of play. Firms and charities are taking up the environmental challenge.

Is the idea of 'good' toy design changing? Integrated marketing campaigns are including play and toys in their mix. Characters derived from books, film and television are dominating sectors of the toy market.

The issues raised are global but the design often local.

## 1. **Toymaster and Osborne's Sports and Toys**

Toymaster is an organisation supporting and enabling its members to sell toy more profitably. The members are independent toy shops like Osborne's in Rushden. Toy master is based in Northampton but represents toy retailers all over the country, enabling them to buy in bulk and compete with the larger retailers and chains.

Toymaster highlights the importance of the continuing importance of the region to the toy trade. Knowledge and expertise are important in selling any product. The service shops like Osborne's provide is threatened as are many other high street outlets the supermarkets, that can only sell a far smaller range of toys.

Jim and William Osborne as owners of a local toy shop have built up knowledge about the regional industry and its history. They have also developed a product expertise and know what customers are requesting. The buyer whether of a small shop or a large chain is key to making a toy range successful and they can lead design choices.

**2. Ocean Sole** - this organisation's story is one of logic and magic; the logic of recycling our waste using the magic of imagination, creativity and finally, plenty of passion! They collect discarded flip flops that were previously blighting waterways and coastlines in Kenya. The magic happens through craftsmanship, as talented artisans from local communities earn an income transforming the collected waste into wonderful flip flop creations. The result is a bouquet of colourful, well designed sculptures, playthings, household items, fashion accessories, gifts, inter-actives, stationery and bespoke pieces.

Toys made from recycled materials are becoming more common. Plastic milk bottles are being used to produce new nursery products. International toy standards need careful consideration but recycling and reuse seems to generate creative play.



**3. Green Board Games (GBG)**- Gary Wyatt was on an international flight and spent the best part of the journey playing number plate games, creating words from numbers and then extending the game by making words from the letters; beginning with A, B, C, and then linking them to birds, fish, mammals, etc, it was here the Alpha Animals board game was devised. Many at the thought of what they deem an ingenious idea, usually leave it so – never to take it to the next stage – indeed, it is often the thought of “that must already exist” or “it’ll never work/sell” that prevents an individual fulfilling the potential of the idea... Or their own potential... It was this very turning point where the stifled entrepreneurial Wyatt spirit began to emerge.

Toy innovation and design has to go hand in hand with successful marketing and intellectual property protection. Today the environment has to be considered. He had an ecological and ethical ambition to fulfil and wanted to try to ensure his products were made as “GREEN” as possible. GBG uses recycled material and reduces its carbon footprint wherever possible; this is something GBG will always do; although it is not critical to their unique selling position (USP) it is the reasoning behind the name and holds substance in the production of the product. “And what is the key USP?” – You may ask; there will be no hesitation in Mr Wyatt’s answer to that question: “Simple” he would say, “Learning is critical to GBG’s positioning in the marketplace and making it fun is critical to the positioning and the consumer!” And from this simplicity was born the strap-line to Gary’s most successful games yet – The BrainBox range – play together, learn together.



**4. DKL Marketing** - have been distributing the finest range of toys from their Northamptonshire Headquarters for over 24 years. Founded in March 1989 by the Hawaleschka family, DKL's name originates from family names Dorte, Kai & Lise. Kai Hawaleschka (Managing Director) has been in toys for most of his life having his interest sparked by his father who owned toy factories in Sweden and Denmark. DKL remains a family owned business, continuously expanding with new companies requesting DKL to distribute their products. As well as running DKL Kai is also a board member of the British Toy & Hobby Association. They exclusively distribute the following toy brands to the UK & Ireland: Hama Beads, Corolle Dolls, Wonderworld Wooden Toys, and Miniland Educational. Their ethos is 'To Make Children Happy' backed by a strong mission statement; 'To Supply Fine Quality Educational & Craft Toys To the Trade'.

The Wonderworld Eco House featured in the frame was a winner in the Slow Toy Movement Toy awards and sums up what is considered a "good" toy design today, which includes environmental concerns.

**5. Asobi and Slow Toy Movement** - Asobi was born in January 2009 as Thierry Bourret frustration at trying to find 'eco-friendly' or at least 'nature aware' toys for his son that did not cost the earth, in more ways than one! He wanted toys that looked good, felt good and had no batteries... but were still fun to play with. He does not claim to be an eco-warrior but has strong feelings about protecting our environment for future generations. He also wanted to demystify the belief that 'green' means expensive.

The companies for whom they distribute are designer/owner managed which ensures quality. Most of the toys they distribute are made of recycled or recyclable materials, or are 'nature aware' and good value for money. The wood used is from a sustainable source. Where possible, the manufacturers are using eco friendly paint and colour. The factories making the toys are not all based in Europe but the minimise transport as far as they can. They visit factories to check that no child labour is used and ensure that the staff is treated fairly. They have a green policy and use suppliers with a similar ethos.

Asobi has been an active promotor of the Slow Toy Movement. They run a competition annually. A slow toy is a toy that ignites imagination, inspires creativity and gives children the freedom to develop at their own pace. It is a well-made, good quality toy that stands the test of time and rather than distracting children. A Slow Toy has true play value. Must be available in independent stores. Must inspire the mind. Must not require batteries, Must not be solely made from plastic, It has to stand the test of time. It has to promise true play value. It must be a well made toy.

**6. Toy Samples** - DKl have provided some examples of the wide range of toys they distribute from craft items through to wooden toys and dolls.

Also included in this section is a doll sack produced by Child's Play. Michael Twinn when he was managing director always sold toys alongside his books. The concept developed into providing sack with books and toys sold or provided together, allowing the story to be explored in a variety of different ways. Here the old lady actually swallows the fly and a lot more.

### **7. The British Toy & Hobby Association Poster**

This trade organisation was established in 1944 to represent the interests of British toy manufacturers and to raise standards of practice in the industry. Today it has around 140 members ranging from international toy giants to small family-run businesses that together account for over 90% of the UK toy market.

Membership of the British Toy & Hobby Association (BTHA) shows the member's commitment to adhere to the BTHA Code of Practice under the umbrella of the Lion Mark which includes rules covering ethical and safe manufacture of toys, toy safety, a ban on counterfeit goods, an assurance to market responsibly, a commitment to improving sustainability and a desire to promote the value of all play through support of the Make Time 2 Play campaign featured on the poster and on cards on display. Our members are manufacturers committed to making good quality toys in a responsible way. The BTHA also administers the Toy Trust- the industry's charity and also backs research and events like this exhibition.

## Creative Community

Architects often consider play in their designs. Modernists highlighted the benefits of sport and play in their plans. Post-modernists can be seen to be playful with architectural forms. Creative companies, like Pixar and Internet firms are commissioning playful work spaces. Play at work is seen to generate new ideas and creative design.

Even when the working day is done, play continues to stimulate design. It is through play that different generations share knowledge and expertise. We all play and it makes us more creative.

1. **James Engel** - At Spaced Out, play underpins the ethos and skill base of the Design Studio. Some projects are dedicated to play, all embrace play within the process and many projects bring to life spaces in which play is championed.

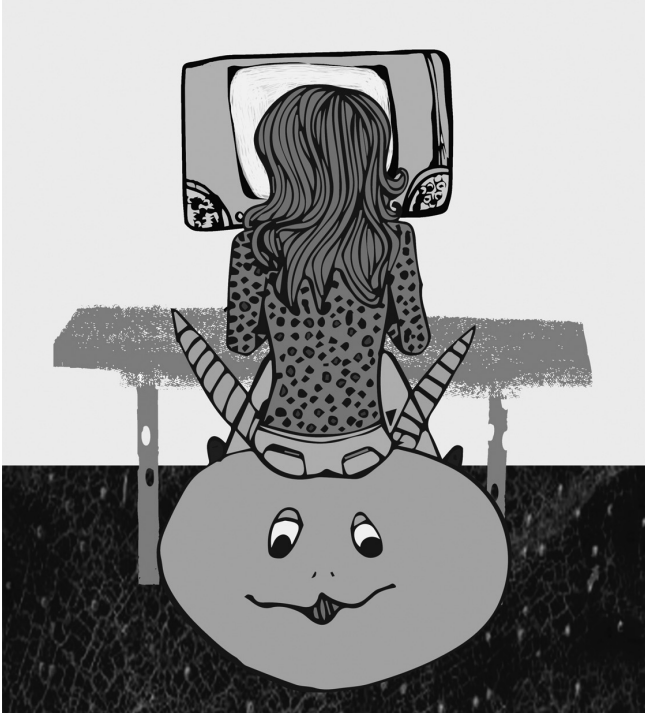
James Engel – Architect and Andie Scott – Artist developed a series of play spaces for the Arts Council in the early 1990s. Through these influential projects, under the banner of Audacity and Letgo they forged wider collaborations with increasing confidence. Many projects with play as a central theme, working with youth groups, forming community art events and creating permanent gallery exhibits, like the full body mapping screens at the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow in collaboration with Richard Layzell – Performance Artist.

More recently Architecture projects with Spaced Out have included a visionary solution for the reinstatement of Gas Holder No.8 adjacent to the University of The Arts in London, titled 'The Crown of Kings Cross' and the soon to be completed The Morris Art Studios and Community Facility at Drayton Park Primary School. At Drayton Park Primary School, working with Landscape Architect Tim Archer, Spaced Out has designed a partly covered dry dock play space which incorporates a historic RNLI Lifeboat.

The boat nestling under and in front of the building within the boundary of the school playground yet clearly visible from the street. The building derived its form from the stories that the children recounted about the lifeboat. The form of the building is a mixture of industrial and seaside vernacular architecture, employing weatherboarding and in part is raised on columns as if negotiating the shore line. The lifeboat, which has been a permanent 'real' piece of play equipment for nearly twenty years at the School now has a new situation, which has already started to inspire new experiences and memories.

Through play, whether making objects, making drawings, building installations or designing whole works of Architecture, Andie Scott, James Engel and the Spaced Our studio remain firm believers that play drives creativity and brings about innovation.

James has just joined the University leading the subject area including Architecture, Interior and Product Design.



**2. Richard Crocker** was employed by The University of Northampton, as an Associate on a funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership with BCE (Distribution) Ltd.

The firm produce leisure games, not only pool tables as featured in the exhibition but also air hockey and indoor versions of outdoor games like basket ball nets to fit on internal doors. Richard is their chief designer involved in graphic and product design. The project embedded design skills in house.

These sort of games and toys have been found in pubs and clubs for many years but are now also found in office work spaces.

**3. Alexandra Hill** - The brief for this undergraduate project was to design a contemporary workplace for Grupo Konecta; a contact centre servicing company who specialise in customer service and sales outsourcing. The problem with the current building and interior design is that function has been highly prioritized over form, resulting in a lack of personalization and creativity. The office is very minimal with little character or detail making the space bland and sterile looking; the re-design intended to create a space that employees are happy to engage with. By emphasizing play within design the space has increased motivation and enthusiasm for all employees.

The concept of the development was to merge the outdoors with the interior, drawing inspiration from nature in all aspects such as form, colour and materials. The office incorporates a sense of fun yet still obtains a level of sophistication; the design intends to motivate and revitalise the user; it was vital that the final design was created around the staff to uplift the atmosphere and morale of all employees working for Grupo Konecta. Overall the design needed to display characteristics that represent a fresh, innovative, contemporary and fun environment.

**4. Creative Community Cabinet** - This case reflects the final two sections of the exhibition. Bonzo the Dog created by George Studdy is now ninety years old and has been included to illustrate that character development and the toy industry is nothing new. The book is open at an illustration from 'The Sketch' showing his reaction to the new Bonzo toys in the 1920s.

Action Man was produced by Palitoy, a subsidiary of Mettoy and alongside it we have included current Games Workshop figurines. Battles and fighting strategies still have their place in play and toy design. The films also included the Star Wars toys one of the most successful toy merchandising programs ever.


Sindy is also included here and in the film showing. It shows how the British doll design industry developed in the second half of the twentieth century.

Finally the cabinet holds two Camberwick Green items a plastic version of a traditional game and a DVD of the original television shows.

**5. Trumptonshire and Computer Games** - the University have been working with the animation archive of Gordon Murray. Camberwick Green with Windy Miller was the first of three series of 13 episodes shown first in 1966. It was the first stop animation colour in Children's television. This was followed by Trumpton (1967) and Chigley (1968) and continued to be shown on television until 1987.

The characters are now being developed to work as an app on telephones and tablets. Computer games development in the region will be explored further for the second exhibition. Interactive screens are turning books into toys in a new way. The University is involved in training the designs that the industry requires.

**6. Bassett-Lowke Shed** - The shed represents all those individuals that use sheds as creative places. It has been laid out by volunteers from the Bassett-Lowke Society and local volunteers. It also houses a Space Hopper made locally and is pasted with an article describing how Gerry Anderson used his shed.



**7. Publishing Toys** - Books are spread throughout the exhibition. The earliest horn books duplicated as simple bats. Playing cards are some of the oldest surviving block printed items. Books have been made of rags, board and plastics as well as paper and now e-books offer new options. Books can contain pop up illustrations, be die-cut and produced with texture inserts, smells and sound chips.

Illustration and printing is used for board games, jigsaws and packaging. Local firms like Chapmans were involved in provided boxes for games like Trivial Pursuit..

Illustrators like Barbara Sampson, Jessie Eckel and Carol Tratt are typical of those involved in producing illustrations. The University has BA in Illustration and several of the graduate this year have the skills and style of work required by the growing UK games industry.

**8. Quotations** - The visitor will also find quotations placed in speech bubbles throughout the exhibition. They help define play and why it considered Important for everyone's creativity.



## Films

1. **Bassett-Lowke Footage** c 1932 supplied by 78 Derrigate and University of Northampton Clips of play at the School of Art and Theatre and toy production in Northampton from a film made by Bassett-Lowke. Followed by a short clip of him playing with a train set in his garden.

2. **Rosebud Toys** Footage supplied by British Pathé Ltd 25.01.1968: The film shows how the company designed and manufactured the Rosebud dolls.

3. **Teddy Bears** Footage supplied by Media Archive of Central England (MACE) - ATV Today: 02.03.1977: This film shows how Burbank Toys manufactured teddy bears.

4. **Metros (Mettoy)** Footage supplied by MACE ATV Today: 05.12.1980: A short silent clip shows Corgi's Metros which the doors and windows.

5. **Sindy Doll** Footage supplied by MACE Central News: 11.03.1982: Coverage of the launch of a new Sindy linked with the Royal wedding that year.

5. **Star Wars Toys** Footage supplied by MACE Central News: 22.10.1982: Star Wars factory visit showing the packing line and new designs to be added to the range.

6. **Children Being in the World** Footage courtesy of [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) Uploaded by Manish Jain on 24.05.2008 A film by KB Jinan showing illiterate children working and playing in India.

## Feedback

The organisers would welcome contributions from visitors. Particularly those involved in the local toy industry. There is an opportunity to leave your stories in the gallery on coloured sheets of paper to be added to the bunting or if you prefer you can to contact us after the event.

The Museum of Childhood are interested to learn about the history of the toy trade in the region and we will offer to share any information we collect with them.

We are particularly interested in the design of play things and places and how play generates creativity. If you have any experience of how play has helped you be creative do share your stories with us.

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### Website

<http://www.northampton.ac.uk/info/20517/research-in-the-school-of-the-arts/1932/design-research-group-drg>

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# Players' List

Thanks is due to the following individuals and organisations who played along

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