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"Rock a Bye Baby" : opening speech for the toy exhibition at the Faculty of Child and Adult Education of the University of Debrecen

Pedagogika Przedszkolna i Wczesnoszkolna nr 1 (3), 194-198

2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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“Rock a Bye Baby”

Opening speech for the toy exhibition at the Faculty of Child and Adult Education of the University of Debrecen

Every age creates its own world of play, culture of play, so it can have play a significant role in the process of transmitting culture. We always lose something from the past, but we also add something, we create as well. We are not happy to leave our values behind, but we make sure to preserve our heritage for the future, at least in a museum.

Our personal and material environment is renewing, changing and being formed; science is evolving, and the pattern of this inevitably appears in the world of play, and that of both children and adults. Children are not yet able to make conscious decisions about what is good and what is not, what is valuable and what is not, what is beautiful and what is not. We adults show them and confirm what to follow, but we also encounter many obstacles during this process. For example fashion, profit, the pursuit of quick success, competition, which is less concerned with the pedagogical usefulness. This is how toys become what they are. Of course, there are a lot of them which carry many values but there are others, which should be kept in the drawer or in the cupboard. Yet, they are products of an era, which bear the characteristic features of the society, culture, technology and trade.

We are dealing with this and similar issues when we are trying to prepare future professionals in multiple fields of study and in several academic specializations for the professional tasks of dealing with children. In the professional fields of infant and child development and kindergarten teacher training it has a special significance to understand play and to promote the development of children through playing. That is why the toy collection of Judit Grozdics aroused our interest in the first place. The other reason is linked to our town. In our close collaboration with the town management it has a priority to act together to turn Hajdúböszörmény into the town of children. So we thought of the toy exhibition as a tourist spectacle, too.

In 2011 we met Judit Grozdics, the collector, who has been passionate about collecting dolls, accessories and other toys for 33 years and who has recently started to collect toys for boys, as well. Now we have reached a situation when in Hajdúböszörmény, at the Faculty of Child and Adult Education of the University of Debrecen we can open this exhibition. In the premises at our disposal we provide a sample of the toys of the recent past but especially of the present day. We intended to arrange the dolls according to age, and tried to form groups for the different types, so the visitors will meet a diversity of genres, and the world of fairy tale will also appear. The collector allows a part of her collection to be used by the children, so we could equip a separate play house for playing after the visit.

Judit Grozdics and our faculty invite the visitors for a unique exhibition. Several hundreds of toys can be seen in showcases and on podiums in an area of 220 m². The colourful world of play is presented with toys of the modern days and the recent past. A wide range of dolls (baby dolls, lifelike Reborn dolls, Baby Born, Baby Annabell dolls, Barbie, Bratz and porcelain dolls) in various sizes and attire complete with rich accessories are arranged in themed displays (free time, shopping, jobs and trades, travelling). There is also a sample of the favourite toys of the boys.

The utilization of the exhibition is the training programs, its role in the professional training. The collection provides knowledge, shapes the students' approach, their personalities, has practical usefulness. The exhibition focuses on the baby so it presents the countless possibilities of playing with them.

What aspects will the exhibition guide you through? History of dolls, doll types, dolls of historical ages and their environment, playing with dolls at different ages (a kind of knowledge base); opportunities and activities for playing with dolls: ideas, themes for playing; design of playing areas; necessary tools for playing; additional tools and accessories for playing with dolls; arrangement of the exhibition: themed layout; chronological arrangement; system and taxonomy of toys; making of a doll: toy development and presentation of the development of the children's play with doll.

The exhibition helps the preparation process of shaping of students' leisure time culture getting familiar with cultural forms and methods connected to childhood.

The exhibition plays a role in the preservation of cultural values and value transfer.

The exhibition can be inspiring to start collecting and collectors of the future can be trained.

Practical skills that can be acquired during the management of the collection there are:

- exhibition management practice;
- collection presentation and exhibition presentation practice;
- collection initiative, their arrangement, presentation, the planning of the methodology of continuing the collection.

Now we listed some specific exhibits, thematic units:

- education, teaching: kids care, school preparation, school, junior and senior section, child care, nursery, baby education, kindergarten toys, bathing toys;
- transport equipment, machinery: boat, car, plane, motorcycle, bike, dump truck, bucket;
- services: bakery, coffee shop, jewellery shop, boutique, supermarket, florist, pet shop, veterinary clinic, a children's hospital, shopping arcade market, essence, gingerbread, "Titanic" — operable ship;

— world of tales: *Sleeping Beauty*, *Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, brides coach, fairy-dwelling;

— movie heroes, film actors: such as Tarzan (tropical life), 101 Dalmatians, The Smurfs, Eliza of the *My Fair Lady*.

The exhibition gives the possibility to track the evolution of game culture through a specific toy, the doll:

— the material of the doll (what is it made of?): porcelain, plaster, baked clay, rags — its elaboration — lifelike, artistic dolls, moving, movable dolls;

— its clothing, wearing: prom, an evening wear, street wear, beach summer clothes, sailor, Native American, shepherd, nun, Hungarian folk costumes;

— the person displayed by the doll: its age; life conditions and situations; activities; facial expression; movement, moving and posture;

— the activities that can be performed with the doll: caring, nursing (bathing, dressing, feeding, combing, taking for a walk, laying down, lulling, etc.); education; as a partner — shopping, services, postal services, excursion; life situations — healing, in kindergarten, school, hairdresser, entertainment, at parties, celebration, ceremony, travel, vacation, make up, etc.; acting as an object of a less suitable action — ornamental;

— the doll's environment: house, palace, luxury villas, two-storey Barbie house, terraced house in a living situation (meal, bedrooms, living room, bathroom), underwater fairy palace.

Specific value of the collection included in experimental meeting with the favourite toys of prior ages and our times, with the dolls and other playing tools, which will become the subjects of future museums.

What can we see in the exhibition?

Baby dolls (Room 1, hallway showcase)

We can see the lifelike Reborn dolls, unique works of doll makers. The smaller lifelike dolls made out of plasticine that can be baked; they are unique. Among the baby dolls we can see Chou Chou and Zapf dolls (including Baby Born, Baby Born Mini World, and Baby Annabell dolls), Mattel baby dolls, Simba, Hasbro and Götz dolls. Most of the dolls are interactive.

The family of Barbie dolls

The more than 50 year old Barbie, the thin and pretty dress-up doll conquered the whole world. In particular, it is the favourite toy of the girls. The collection presents many of the Barbie family members. You can see them in the original and handmade dresses, with additional supplies in different life situations, they also appear as tale characters; we present a few stars (actors, musi-

cians, models) and famous personalities as Barbie figures. An interesting attraction is the mini Plaza.

The family of Bratz dolls

The Bratz toy family produced since 2001 was designed with a bigger than the average head, bigger eyes, lush lips, and a model shape. The exhibition presents the Bratz dolls of different years in different clothes in different life situations.

Porcelain dolls

Among the Alberon dolls both numbered new and old dolls can be found. There is also a porcelain Götz doll. Some artisan reached the level of arts and crafts the dolls dressed in beautiful textile clothes. The porcelain dolls are particularly suitable for dressing in folk costumes and for presenting the habits of different ages and folks. The collection contains three very old, approximately 80-year-old dolls too. The rare curiosity of one of them is that it is a sleeping doll, which closes its eyes when laid down. A few of the dolls can be wound up mechanically, and they play music and move.

Child-size dolls

The standing, 95–100 cm tall dolls are from Mattel, Simba, and a few of them are of Chinese origin. The clothes of Mattel's 95 cm tall dolls can be worn by 2–4 year old girls, so they can turn into princesses or fiancées.

Fairy tales and movies (Room 4, hallway showcases)

Classic and contemporary films, fairy tale scenes and characters also appear in the exhibition, such as *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Aladdin*, *William Tell*, *Robin Hood*, *The Smurfs*, *101 Dalmatians* and *Harry Potter*.

The world of boys' toys (Room 5)

The exhibition also provides a sample of the most popular playing tools of boys. The past and present tools of transportation, vehicles, construction, sports and fighting games can be seen in the showcases, on landscaping table and shelves.

Wooden toys (big hall)

Old wooden furniture can be seen in the context of rural lifestyle. The dolls are displayed in folk costume or peasant clothing. Complementary tools for working in the fields are located around the house. The large, furnished replica home is also made of wood.

Life path and leisure games (big hall)

The exhibition follows the major life events by presenting the wedding, the baby's arrival, the kindergarten, the school, the residential building, some occupations (hairdresser, office worker and server) and by a diverse presentation of the spending of leisure time (playground, ice skating, horse riding and sailing).

Clowns (hallway showcase)

The funny, cheerful way of the expression on their faces and their postures, their different size and colourful clothing rouse cheerful emotions the visitors.

We are grateful to Judit Grozdicz for the collection, for her passionate way of collecting and her dedicated cooperation in the realization of the exhibition. The decorator, Antal Varga made the exhibition and its environment a real spectacle and arranged them into a harmonic unity.

We will do our best to make as many people as possible familiar with the exhibition, it should be a spectacle of Hajdúböszörmény, an attractive touristic program for children, and it will also provide a unique opportunity in our training programmes to learn more about play.

This exhibition presents the above mentioned values for the visitors with the hope that the encounter between the visitor and the collection will be a great experience.

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