



**Press release on the special exhibition
8 March – 27 October 2024**

Plush, Play and Pioneers Women in toy design

The current special exhibition at Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel, *Plush, Play and Pioneers – Women in toy design*, presents the legacy of women whose creative work has had a lasting impact on the toy industry.

Women have played a key role in creating some of the best-known and most popular toys, such as dolls, plush toys, board games, therapeutic and educational toys, etc. These women paid great attention to the needs of children and shaped educational reforms.

The exhibition presents pioneering women who were, or still are, successful in the toy industry, highlighting their creative work, their working conditions and struggle for equality.

One of them was *Margarete Steiff*: Her perseverance, and more specifically her soft toy *Small Elephant*, laid the foundation for the global success of Steiff. The exhibition also showcases the lives of doll makers *Elena Scavini*, *Käthe Kruse* and *Sasha Morgenthaler*, whose creations are now highly coveted collectibles.

The Bauhaus student *Alma Siedhoff-Buscher* also left her mark on toy design, not least with the *Small Ship-Building Game*. The Czech *Libuše Niklová*, meanwhile, was one of the first toy designers to create plastic figures with distinctive colours, smells and sound effects.

Caroline Märklin introduced tin toys to the product range of her family business, which her sons later expanded to include the world-famous model railways. The feminist *Elisabeth Magie Phillips* invented the board game *The Landlord's Game* to share her anticapitalistic ideas. A later version of the game, *Monopoly*, came to be known worldwide.

The show also features contemporary design, such as Renate Müller's burlap animals, which were popular in the GDR and have been used for therapeutic purposes; or the toys of Heroes Will Rise founder *Cas Holman*, which promote creativity in children and stand for a diverse and inclusive world.

The women portrayed have had a sustained impact on the world of play and, through innovation and entrepreneurial spirit, have created toys that now feature in museums across the globe.

Interactive games and a colourful programme

The whole museum is brimming with games, animals, dolls and teddies; there are interactive games for children, and our – likewise interactive – narrative tour has been expanded to

include numerous new stations. Every month, one of the portrayed designers takes centre stage in a special event: April, for example, will see a conversion of the museum's display window into a walkable play area with Cas Holman's *Rigamajig*. In September, visitors can create and sew "throw pillows" based on Renate Müller's designs. Other highlights include a big annual summer party in late August, with loads of games and handicraft stations as well as a competition.

Accompanying events

Friday, 8 March, 11 am – 4 pm

Exhibition opening

Sunday, 17 March, 11 am

Margarete Steiff – cinema

Film: *Margarete Steiff*, 2005, FSK 0

Location: Stadtkino Basel

Wednesday, 3 April, 10 am – 12 midday

Wednesday matinée

Guided tour of the exhibition, followed by coffee and cake

Saturday, 13 April, 10 am – 6 pm

Cas Holman – opening of the display window

Sunday, 5 May, 10 am – 4 pm

Elizabeth Magie Phillips – Monopoly day

Wednesday, 22 May, 2 – 5 pm

Swiss story day

Listen to stories written by famous authors like Astrid Lindgren, Trudi Gerster and many others. They will be read to you by expert storytellers.

Sunday, 16 June, 11 am – 6 pm

Kruse, Morgenthaler, Scavini – doll afternoon

Floral wreaths & plaited hair

Saturday, 6 July, 10 am – 6 pm

Alma Siedhoff-Buscher – 10 000 wooden toy blocks

Sunday, 25 August, 10 am – 4 pm

Summer party

It's high time for another summer jamboree: pop in and join us for some arts and crafts fun, loads of games and culinary delights. Swing by and bring your friends!

Wednesday, 28 August, 10 am – 12 midday

Wednesday matinée

Guided tour of the exhibition, followed by coffee and cake

Saturday, 31 August, 10 am – 12 midday

Libuše Niklová – upcycling PET bottles

Create your own PET figure with movable parts

Sunday, 22 September, 1 – 5:30 pm

Renate Müller – Bauhaus cuddle pillow

Create a throw pillow based on Renate Müller's designs.

Sunday, 27 October, 10 am – 6 pm

Caroline Märklin – outdoor railway

Opening hours

January to November: Tuesday to Sunday 10 am – 6 pm

December: 10 am – 6 pm on all days

For special opening hours, visit www.swmb.museum

Entrance fees

CHF 7.– / 5.–; no surcharge for the special exhibition.

Children under 16 are free; under 12-year-olds need to be accompanied by an adult.

Images and further information on the exhibition

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Images: www.spielzeug-welten-museum-basel.ch/de/museum/medien.html

Exhibition texts are available in German, French, English, Italian and in plain language. The whole museum is wheelchair-accessible.

Sign up for our newsletter if you would like to receive information on our exhibitions and events:

news@swm-basel.ch

About the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel

A doll plays in the toy grocery shop, teddy bears race one another in pedal cars, an entire amusement park is set into motion at the push of a button ... With more than 6,000 objects, the Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel (Toy Worlds Museum Basel) is unique across the world in its abundance and quality. Accommodated in a building from 1867, it lies in the very heart of Basel. Its cheery, lovingly arranged display windows have meanwhile become famous far and wide: they attract visitors of all ages and are an invitation to discover a world full of wonders. Several times a year, special temporary exhibitions on a wide variety of topics beckon visitors on a foray into new cultural realms, shining a spotlight on the unknown and placing the exhibits in a – sometimes surprising – historical context.