

A complete sourcebook of stylish products
for the modern family Phyllis Richardson

Designed for Kids



Thames & Hudson

Play & Objects, Building Blocks, Things That Go, Ride-ons & Trolleys, Play Houses, Dolls' Houses, Dolls, Creative

Late 20th-century research into child development has resulted in innovations in children's products. Many new 'toys' designed for babies are more tactile, satisfying to hold and easy to grasp. As children begin to really play, they are now greeted with toys designed to stimulate or to encourage fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, and to engage with their natural attraction to colour and texture. That children appreciate the texture of cloth or wood over hard plastic is something that is taking longer to percolate through toy manufacturers, but it is coming through independent designers.

Part of the move towards innovation in toy design must be down to a generation of parents determined to spend more time interacting with their children, which means they are more aware of their children's environments and the things that amuse and interest them. For the educated parent, toys, whether they are dolls or computer games, can all be learning tools, albeit fun, rather than just sources of entertainment. And many parents expect to be entertained or at least somewhat intrigued with the toys that their children play with, even though most accept that there will always be some objects, such as certain branded characters, that children will become enamoured of, but which will never serve any real developmental purpose for the child or have any aesthetic appeal for the design-conscious adult.

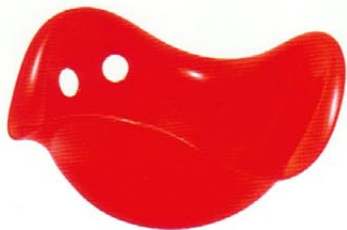


Alex Hochstrasser

Active People, Switzerland

www.bilibo.com

It is one of those toys that seems glaringly obvious in its appeal: a bowl-shaped piece of plastic in a range of bright colours. For anyone who has ever entertained children in the kitchen the plastic mixing bowls are always a hit. With Bilibo children have a basic object that really lets the imagination run wild. They can sit in it, spin around in it, carry toys in it, or, if there are more than one, stack them into a colourful tower. In fact the stacking aspect can be fully explored in the sibling toy, Bilibo Mini, and colour-combining Bilibo Pixel. Swiss designer Alex Hochstrasser launched Bilibo in 2001 and it has won an array of UK and European design awards, and is in several museum collections. It is constructed of 'virtually unbreakable' food-grade, high-density polyethylene and is completely recyclable.



Babal

Alex Hochstrasser
Active People, Switzerland
www.activepeople.com

Alex Hochstrasser is like a one-man toy-making machine. After working for renowned design firms in New York, Barcelona and Tokyo, he began his career as a toy designer with the award-winning Billibo (see opposite). His design for the Astrojax, a dexterity toy that involves spinning three soft balls on a string in a way that keeps them constantly in motion and not touching one another, inspired his move to Swiss toy company Active People, for whom he created the Babal balls. These are yet another bright contribution to 'open-ended play' that allows children to explore shapes and ideas without dictating goals. Made from fantastically squishable elastic polyurethane foam, the Babal and smaller 'junior' are a ball within a ball. They can be fitted together or played with separately. The balls have a flattened bottom so that they can also be stacked into towers if you get more than one set. They come in six colours.



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[YO]² Delta

Alex Hochstrasser, Lee Spector
Active People, Switzerland
www.activepeople.com

Another Alex Hochstrasser invention for children who like a little more activity: a combination yo-yo and spinning top. The cone-shaped toy can be worked up and down on its string like a yo-yo, but also spun on end over a flat surface, adding a whole new dimension to the yo-yo fanatic's bag of tricks. Like the Astrojax before it, the [YO]² Delta is sure to merit its own YouTube stunts page.



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