

Mon ours en peluche

Press kit



Dec 4, 2024
— June 22, 2025

Teddy bear, Germany or United Kingdom, around 1935 © Les Arts Décoratifs / Christophe Dellière. Graphic design: Sylvain Reymondon and Benjamin Fernandes



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Andrew J. Martin-Weber and Beejan Land
for The Divine Charlotte.
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MUSÉE DES ARTS
DÉCORATIFS

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Anne Monier Vanryb
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Press release

1. Jean-Charles de Castelbajac — *Nounours*

1988

Teddy bear; faux fur; synthetic fibers

© Les Arts Décoratifs / Jean Tholance

2. Palitoy, Kenner Parker Toys Inc., American Greetings Corporation — *Bisounours Grosdodo*

1983
Synthetic plush filled with synthetic fibers; plastic eyes and nose

© Les Arts Décoratifs

Undisputed King of Toys, the Teddy Bear Takes Over the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, from December 4, 2024, to June 22, 2025, to tell its incredible story, from Prehistory to the Present Day. 130 teddy bears, selected from the 15,000 toys in the museum's collection, are on display, offering a fascinating look at the evolution of this now-iconic object. *My Teddy Bear* offers an immersive experience into the world of this companion, who inspires both artists and fashion designers. It also plays an important role in cinema, advertising, and literature, becoming a true cultural and social symbol. Anne Monier Vanryb, curator in charge of the toy collections, is curating this exhibition.



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Visitors are welcomed even before entering the exhibition by an immersive scenography featuring an innovative graphic and sound design. Bear growls, represented by progressively larger onomatopoeic drawings, invite visitors to enter the exhibition. From ferocity to softness, from the wild to fiction, the exhibition takes the public into the heart of a “forest,” offering an unprecedented journey into the den of these mammals.



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

4. Teddy bear —
Around 1930-1940
Mohair plush;
embroidered nose
© Les Arts Décoratifs

Revered or feared since prehistoric times, the bear is not a mysterious or unknown animal to humans. The exhibition opens with the very first representations of the animal, such as the drawings in the caves of Lascaux, as well as the first pierced bear teeth, which already shape the myth of a strong and powerful animal, whose representation evolves in the Middle Ages. It is from this period that the bear gradually becomes, in literature, foolish and greedy, as seen in *Le Roman de Renart* and the famous *Fables of La Fontaine*. Photographs of bear trainers in circuses also demonstrate the decline of the animal.

This astonishing journey continues with the birth of the teddy bear in the early 20th century. In 1902, following a bear hunt in which U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt participated, the famous *Teddy Bear* was born. Refusing to shoot a defenseless cub, Roosevelt's action was reported in the press, inspiring Morris Michtom to create a bear-shaped toy, which became an immediate commercial success. Across the Atlantic, Margarete Steiff and her nephew Richard invented the first jointed teddy bear in 1902 and also helped popularize this toy in Germany. The teddy bear quickly became a bestseller, making Germany the world's leading producer. The fierce animal, transformed into a soft and endearing replica, then established itself as the ultimate comfort object. A symbol of softness and tenderness, it became a star among children.



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5. Ajena —
Teddy bear
1993
Short plush; plastic eyes;
plush nose
© Les Arts Décoratifs

With its round and cuddly shapes, the teddy bear quickly becomes a prominent character in children's literature and popular culture. Iconic figures such as *Winnie the Pooh*, *Paddington*, *Little Brown Bear*, and the *Care Bears* now inhabit the world of children. These bear heroes, who occupy the collective imagination, are represented through original drawings and toys, some of which are being shown for the first time from the reserves of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.



6.

6. Steiff —
Teddy bear
Around 1910 or 1912
Mohair plush; shaved
muzzle; felt pads
© Les Arts Décoratifs /
Christophe Dellière

The journey continues with the evolution of the teddy bear over the decades, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, to meet the ever-growing demands of children and parents. Initially made of mohair and wood wool, it is now produced in softer and safer materials. Ideal for cuddling and becoming the famous “comfort object,” it plays an important role in the child's development, as demonstrated by British pediatrician and psychoanalyst Winnicott in his theory of the transitional object. It also inspires contemporary artists such as Annette Messenger, Benoît Piéron, and Carole Benzaken. The color palette expands, and materials evolve to provide even more softness and safety, as seen with the *Wendy Boston* bears.



7. Moschino —
*Black Teddy Bear Coat
 and Belt*
 Fall-Winter Collection
 1988-1989
 1988
 Wool; metal; teddy bear
 plush
 © Les Arts Décoratifs

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



The exhibition highlights contemporary toy makers who use the teddy bear to help and support children, such as *Tamalou*, specially designed to comfort them in difficult times. Made-in-France production is also presented, including manufacturers such as *Pamplemousse Peluche* and *Adada*. Today, the Teddy Bear is no longer just a child's companion; many adults keep these toys and the memories of their childhood. The Teddy Bear is becoming increasingly popular with adults and has become the ideal gift for Valentine's Day! The journey towards the Teddy Bear as an object of creation continues with a room entirely dedicated to the work of the artist Charlemagne Palestine, who has created a unique immersive installation for the occasion.

From our bedrooms to the red carpets, the teddy bear has become a true icon coveted by collectors, who seek out the rarest models. It also serves as a model for fashion designers, who enjoy transforming it into an accessory.

7. Jean-Charles de Castelbajac and Jeremy Scott, as well as renowned fashion houses such as Christian Dior, Hermès, and Louis Vuitton, have incorporated the teddy bear into their collections and creations, turning it into a true fashion phenomenon. The Musée des Arts Décoratifs has invited numerous designers to reinterpret the wardrobe of this toy, including Marine Serre, Koché, Moschino, and the Issey Miyake house.

As a symbol of climate change, particularly in its polar form, the bear also represents

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object in a new light, through its rich history and its multiple representations in art, culture, and advertising. It offers a unique opportunity to dive into the tender and fascinating world of the teddy bear and understand why this toy continues to win the hearts of both young and old. Contemporary artworks, interactive installations, and one-of-a-kind collectible items enrich this exploration. Through stories and objects, the exhibition reveals how the teddy bear has managed to cross eras and adapt to societal changes. It also reminds us of how this object can carry deep meanings, from intimate emotional bonds to the global issues of our time.

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9. Dakin —
Huggy Bears Teddy Bear
 1980
 Synthetic plush
 © Les Arts Décoratifs

ecological awareness in the media and newspapers.

10. Teddy bear —
 Around 1930-1940
 Mohair plush;
 embroidered nose
 © Les Arts Décoratifs

The exhibition highlights, for the first time, French and European brands such as Les Petites Maries and la Pelucherie, which prioritize environmentally friendly manufacturing processes. These companies showcase eco-responsible production practices and commitments to the preservation of the planet, demonstrating that even toys can contribute to a more sustainable future.

The exhibition *My Teddy Bear* is an invitation to discover this familiar



10.

Catalogue introduction

11. Catalogue of the exhibition *Mon ours en peluche* —
Hardcover, visible stitching
Format: 21 x 29 cm
144 pages
125 illustrations
French version ISBN: 978-2-38314-025-2
English version ISBN: 978-2-38314-027-6
Retail price: €32

The Book

The immense popularity of the teddy bear, now present in every child's room, hides a paradox: how did this fierce and wild animal become the symbol of childhood?

The teddy bear was born at the same time in two different places. In 1902, the toy was invented in the United States in reference to Theodore Roosevelt – hence its Anglo-Saxon name, Teddy's bear, which became teddy bear. In Germany, the same year, Margarete Steiff marketed her first teddy bear, which became a resounding success in Europe and America. From the first examples made of mohair and wood wool, heavy and rigid, the teddy bear has become softer and more flexible. It has been dressed in bright or pastel colors to transform into a comfort object, a transitional object studied and theorized by pediatrician Donald Winnicott. The bear now reigns over a whole menagerie of stuffed animals, but also over children's fiction, thanks to *Winnie the Pooh*, *Michka*, and *Paddington*. Surprisingly, it is also prized by fashion designers who are not afraid to reinvent it. Today, the bear, through the figures of the panda and the polar bear, symbolizes climate change and a nature in danger.

Through five essays and three thematic sections, this catalog traces the history of the teddy bear, from its early beginnings to its transformations and successes. It also explores our relationship with bears since Prehistory. Finally, it draws on a rich array of imagery, offering a wide range of teddy bears, both old and more recent, alongside representations of bears by humans throughout the centuries.



11.

The Authors

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Excerpts from the catalog

Anne Monier Vanryb

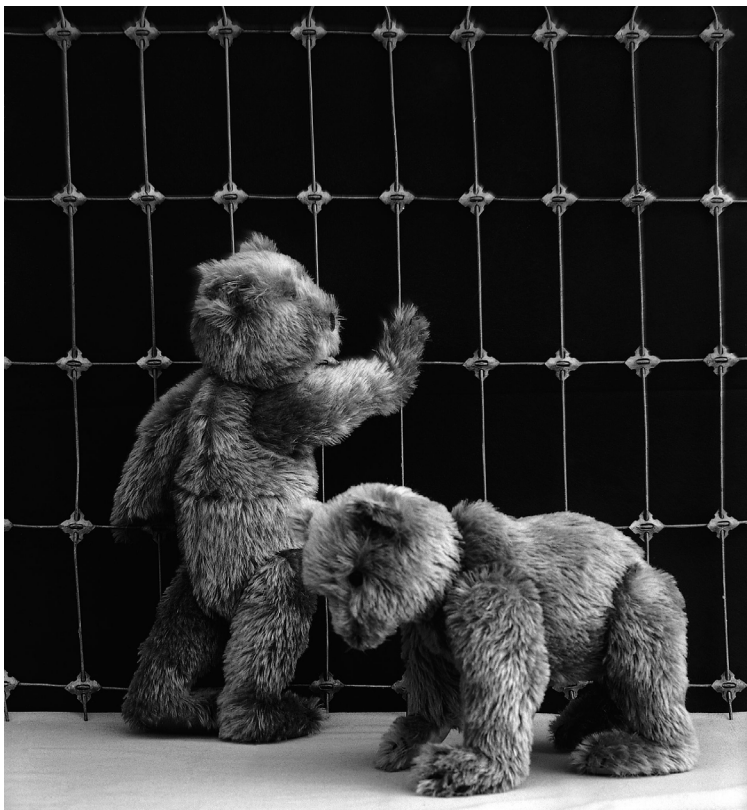
The Birth of the Teddy Bear

12. Anonymous —
Bär 55 PB, photograph
1903
Giengen an der Brenz
© Margarete Steiff GmbH

13. A-POC ABLE ISSEY
MIYAKE —
Japan, 2024
Brewer's proteins,
polyester, polyurethane
© ISSEY MIYAKE INC.

Theodore Roosevelt and the American Legend

In November 1902, Theodore Roosevelt, the very popular President of the United States and a fervent advocate for nature conservation, was invited to a bear hunt by the Governor of Mississippi. To ensure he would not return empty-handed after a long day of tracking, the organizers captured a bear, tied it to a tree, and offered Roosevelt the chance to shoot it. He categorically refused to shoot a defenseless animal. This unusual story was picked up by the newspapers, notably through a cartoon by Clifford Kennedy Berryman, titled "Drawing the Line in Mississippi," which also referred to the drawing of the boundary between Louisiana and Mississippi, arbitrated by Roosevelt.



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The bear thus becomes an unofficial mascot of Roosevelt and the hero of many of Berryman's cartoons depicting episodes from the president's life. (...) Rose and Morris Michtom, owners of a candy store in Brooklyn, inspired by the press, create a stuffed fabric toy which they send to Roosevelt and then sell, with his permission, under the name *Teddy's Bear* – "Teddy's bear" – a common nickname for Theodore. The teddy bear, of which no examples are known today, became very popular and was featured in *Playthings*, the toy industry magazine, in 1906, officially named the *teddy bear*. The following year, the Michtoms partnered with the wholesalers Butler Brothers to create the toy brand *Ideal Novelty and Toy Company*, which manufactured and marketed mohair teddy bears.



She begins to commercialize them, selling eight in 1880, eighteen in 1881, and eleven in 1882. A modest production is set in motion, and by 1883, a price list from the “Filz-Versandt-Geschäfts von Gretchen Steiff” (Gretchen Steiff’s mail-order business for felt items – Gretchen being a diminutive of Margarete – Steiff) mentions children’s toys, sturdy and safe, including colorful-covered elephants (...) Fritz Steiff’s son, Richard, joins the company in 1897 after studying at the Stuttgart School of Decorative Arts. An inventor at heart, he wants to help Steiff innovate. He attempts to articulate the animals. Was he inspired by the dolls, the production of which was booming in Germany at the time, and which Steiff also sold a few models of? Regardless, he focuses on animals whose movements can resemble those of humans – the bear and the monkey – revisiting sketches he made during his visits to the zoo while studying, to refine the posture and expression of his prototypes. This is how, at the end of 1902, the first mohair animals are born, stuffed with wood wool and articulated with strings connecting the limbs to the body: the Aff 60 PB monkey, and especially the first teddy bear.

14.

14. Canterbury Bears
(manufacturer) —
Grégory Bear
United Kingdom, 1988
Mohair plush; glass eyes;
embroidered nose; suede
undersoles
© Les Arts Décoratifs

The Steiff Saga

In the same year, 1902, the German toy brand Steiff launched a revolutionary novelty: a mohair bear with articulated limbs. The company was born from a sewing workshop created in 1877 in Giengen an der Brenz by Margarete Steiff, a young woman paralyzed by polio contracted in her childhood. Possessing a strong character, Margarete strove to conquer, despite her disability, autonomy and independence. She set up a felt-working workshop at her parents’ house, which was equipped with the first sewing machine in the town. In 1880, the young woman was inspired by a pattern published in the December 1879 issue of *Die Modenwelt* to create a small felt elephant. Originally intended as pincushions for needles and pins, the elephants that Margarete Steiff made for her family were greatly appreciated by children, who quickly turned them into toys.

15. Chanteclair
(manufacturer) —
Teddy bear
Between 1960 and 1965
Nylon plush; plastic eyes
and nose; felt tongue
© Les Arts Décoratifs



15.

Wall panels



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.

16. Orli-Jouet
(manufacturer),
Walt Disney Productions
(license) —
Winnie the Pooh
France, 1988
Plush; velvet nose
© Les Arts Décoratifs

17. Sonia Rykiel —
Teddy bear
Paris, 1994
© Les Arts Décoratifs



16.



17.

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.



18.

18. *Grand Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville. Étrennes 1925*, commercial catalog — 1924
© Les Arts Décoratifs

19. Ralph Lauren (designer), Steiff (manufacturer) — *Chairman Bear II* Germany, 1994
© Les Arts Décoratifs

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.

Fictional 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.



19.

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.

20. *Chubby baloo chair* —
Pauline Montironi
(AP Collection)

21. Paco Rabanne —
Teddy bear
France, around 1990
Synthetic fur;
mother-of-pearl; metal
© Les Arts Décoratifs



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Bears of 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.

Activity for the public

FOR CHILDREN

WORKSHOP VISIT

My little pocket teddy bear

The visit to the exhibition leads participants to create their own miniature teddy bear using wool felt. Whether cheerful or grumpy, this pocket-sized companion, a supporter of stories to tell, is perfect for taking on all kinds of big adventures.

Audience: 4-6 years, 7-10 years, family

FOR ADULTS

GUIDED TOUR

My teddy bear

The undisputed king of toys, the teddy bear makes its way into the Musée des Arts Décoratifs to tell its incredible story. Born at the very beginning of the 20th century, it quickly won the hearts of children, dethroning toys with histories that date back to antiquity, such as dolls and pull-along animals. Since then, it has become the nearly universal symbol of childhood, as well as tenderness and softness. How did the former king of animals, revered for its strength and feared for its ferocity, transform into the most popular of toys? This is what you will discover by visiting this exhibition. As you move from room to room, let the guide take you through the full richness of the exhibit.

Audience: adults (15 years and +)

FOR GROUPS

GROUP SELF-GUIDED VISIT

My teddy bear

See details above

Audience: adults (15 years and +)

GROUP SELF-GUIDED VISIT

My teddy bear

See details above

*Audience: adults and families
with external guide*

Useful informations

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of the Toy Collection

assisted by Marie-Lou Canovas,
assistant curator in charge
of the Toy Collection

#Expo_OursPeluche

— Les Arts Décoratifs

**The not-for-profit organization
Les Arts Décoratifs brings together
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Johannes Huth, President
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officer
Bénédicte Gady, Acting museum
director

— Musée des Arts Décoratifs

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Métro: Palais-Royal, Pyramides,
Tuileries

Opening hours

→ Tuesday to Friday, 11 am – 6 pm
→ Open late in temporary exhibition
on Thursdays, Saturdays until 9 pm
and Sundays until 8 pm

Admission

→ General admission: € 15
→ Concession: € 10
→ Free for under 26

— Musée Nissim de Camondo

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Opening hours

Closed from August 4, 2024
to early 2026

— Library

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Open Monday 1 pm – 6 pm
and Tuesday to Friday 10 am – 6 pm

— Publications and images

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— Visitor engagement

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