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## **To wind up and charge**

### **Special exhibition of moving toys from the past 100 years**

**20 April 2013 – 6 October 2013**

**Wind-up toys are true marvels. For 100 years they have been delighting children all over the world. The special exhibition "To wind up and charge" is also sure to quicken the pulse of many adults when they catch sight of the numerous sought-after, still functioning collector's items.**

Once dreamed of by children, today irresistible for collectors! With their cars, motorbikes, airships, animals and teddy bears, Schuco, Tippco and Günthermann are surely among the most-admired and well-known early German manufacturers. In the 1950s, the moving toys from Japan were introduced, and there were no boundaries when it came to imagination and creativity. The popcorn vendor with his cart, the magician with his magic tricks or the pipe-smoking woodman are all popular examples. These new toys from Asia were equipped with a wind-up mechanism or operated by batteries.

The early toys were often made completely from tin and could be found with elaborate and detailed lithographs. There were also dolls with porcelain heads on tricycles or bicycles and much more. They were later joined by figures and animals clothed in mohair or other fabrics. The Asian models were predominantly made of plush, plastic and coloured tin.

In the exhibition, all of the different types of wind-up and battery-operated toys will be represented. Through 70 short films beamed onto glass panels placed alongside the individual toys, visitors can enjoy seeing the funny and versatile movements and sequences which the displayed toys are capable of performing.

A monkey ensemble in a jukebox comes to life and starts moving to the music. This "Bimbo-Box" is an unmissable highlight.

### **What is a mechanical toy?**

A mechanical toy can be made to move either by means of a clockwork mechanism (wound up) or using a small electric motor or battery (charged), and is driven by an energy storage device.

Wind-up toys usually contain a coil spring (clockwork motor), and sometimes also a rubber band (rubber motor). The spring is "wound up" just like in a clock mechanism by turning a wind-up key to tighten the spring, after which the spring unwinds and makes the toy move. With battery-operated toys, the mechanism is set in motion by a small motor.

## **The history of the tin toy**

With the early tin toys, there was a major focus on aesthetic aspects. Generally speaking, toys that originate from a past era of craftsmanship were produced to a much higher standard. They are richly decorated, highly imaginative in their movement mechanism and a reflection of their time. The approach of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century led to an increase in demand for goods everywhere, and as a result to an improvement in general living standards. The revolutionary inventions of this period were immediately reproduced in a small scale as tin toys. Up to this point, toys for the poorer population had been much simpler. Most children could only afford handmade objects such as crude dolls for girls, and bats and balls for boys. In wealthy households, many of the toys served the purpose of entertaining the head of the family. Such toys were produced in the 18th and 19th centuries by special, highly creative makers of moving toys, and were sometimes embellished with precious metals and stones.

The emergence of mass production brought about a change in the way in which toys were manufactured. The first tin toys were presented at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. They were still handmade, and were originally based on wooden models, which were used by skilled tinsmiths to shape their metal parts. Machine presses were then used to manufacture the individual parts in series production. Women applied the paintwork and fine detailing by hand, before the parts were assembled, the clockwork mechanism installed and the join soldered by hand.

At the start of the 19th century, the German toy industry was concentrated in two particular regions: Thuringia and Nuremberg. The Thuringian Forest naturally saw the processing of primarily wood and wood products into toys. The Imperial City of Nuremberg, with its sophisticated patrician families and its worldwide trade relations, had always been the home of metalwork of all kinds. Almost all craftsman's trades were also involved to a greater or lesser extent in the manufacture of toys. During the course of the 19th century, the Nuremberg-Fürth toy industry developed a world-famous reputation. The most renowned company names of this period undoubtedly included Bing (est. 1863-65), Carette (1886), Issmayer (1861), Plank (1866) and Schoenner (1875). A further hub of the German toy industry emerged from 1830 onwards in Württemberg, where the company Märklin (est. 1859) in particular went on to become world-famous.

Toys were also manufactured in France and England, using the same production methods. In France, soldering continued to be done by hand long after other countries had switched to the more practical method of joining with tabs and slots. While toy production methods in the United States were similar to those used in Europe, the final products were generally more colourful, and less attention was paid to accurate representation of the finer details.

In the early years of European toy production, much of the work was done by female home workers. They were poorly paid, and were even obliged to salvage all kinds of scrap metal with which to work. They mostly found discarded tin cans on rubbish tips, which they cleaned thoroughly before transforming them into toys. Prison inmates were also often used as a cheap source of labour.

Significant progress in the evolution of mass production was made towards the end of the 19th century, with the development of a suitable technique for printing sheet metal. The introduction of this technique significantly increased production, and gradually eliminated the need for skilled hand painters.

Up until 1900, but in some cases as late as the 1920s, tin figures were soldered together and painted by hand. Around 1900, however, parts were also being stamped out of lithographed sheet metal, shaped and joined together using tabs. This production method, which proceeded to dominate following the end of the First World War, also made it easy to print the company's logo and country of origin.

While the names of the company founders and owners are still known to this day, little is known of the actual creators of these miniature works of art: the technicians, designers and artists in the model workshops. What is more, the fact that many of the pieces sought after today were also painted by children working at home has almost been forgotten.

### **The main players, sales and pricing in the tin-toy industry**

In many dealer and manufacturer catalogues from the period up until the First World War, representations of figures dominated the range. It was not until the rise of the automobile that the little circus artistes, clowns, musicians, drumming monkeys and dancing bears were gradually replaced by vehicles of all kinds. As industrialisation progressed, the toy industry also reacted increasingly quickly to change. The rapid spread of new products was also seen at ever-shorter intervals in toy production – a miniature world of its own. The timeless figures were replaced in children's playrooms by elegant limousines, lightning-fast motorcycles, aircraft and boats. Around 1900, many manufacturers were focusing on achieving natural movements, and this continued to be the case right into the 1950s. One advertising slogan published in a Köhler catalogue read: "Our diverse and imaginative toys are just like the real thing."

Typical early creations are quirky interpretations of animals that perform human actions, such as violin-playing monkeys, a bespectacled cat posing as a teacher or a bear with a baby's pram. Highly popular exports also included comic figures of all kinds, with various versions showcasing Charlie Chaplin's world-famous acts, for example.

The best-sellers from the inter-war period came back into fashion in the 1950s: music-playing clowns from Schuco or the tricycle-riding monkey from Arnold. Unlike the vehicles, the figures were never subject to any real innovation – most of them were merely variations on their much-loved forebears. However, the construction characteristics, colours and materials did change over the course of the decades. A large number of companies modernised their logos several times to keep pace with contemporary design trends. Today, these differences often make it possible to identify and date individual parts.

In comparison to other toys, tin toys were relatively inexpensive.

Here are two prices for Lehmann figures from mail-order catalogues published in 1895:

Ehepaar Lehmann (Lehmann couple)	50 Pfennig (pfennigs)
Rollstuhl (Wheelchair)	70 Pfennig (pfennigs)

Prices from adverts from 1889 and 1890:

Kamerun-Post pr. Dutzend (Cameroon Post, per dozen)	MK 4.50 (marks)
Dienstmänner pr. Dutzend (Porters, per dozen)	M 3.60 (marks)
Berliner-Affen pr. Dutzend (Berlin monkeys, per dozen)	M 2.25 (marks)

In 1900, a chemical worker earned around 120 marks a month, a dock worker around 61 marks. For further comparison, here are some food prices:

1 litre milk = 20 pfennigs, 1 kilo sugar = 65 pfennigs, 1 litre beer = 24 pfennigs and 1 kilo rye bread = 23 pfennigs.

The best sales channels for these mechanical toys throughout the cities of the world were the street traders, the travelling salesmen who brought the manufacturers both fame and revenue. Naturally, shops and mail-order firms were also effective sales channels. The cheap and simple tin toys were sold in great volumes both on the domestic and foreign markets. The street sellers in New York, London and Berlin were all faced with the same challenges: the articles had to be cheap and payable with a single coin, regardless of whether this coin was a 10-pfennig, 50-pfennig or 1-mark coin.

### **An array of German manufacturers**

Today, the mechanical toys produced by German manufacturers are sought-after collector's items. Right from the beginning, and up until the end of the 1930s, Germany played a leading role in toy production. These toys were manufactured to a high quality and – in each of the wide-ranging price categories – were well worth the money. Every tin-toy collector is bound to be familiar with various figures from manufacturers such as Lehmann, Schuco, Eberl, Stock and Köhler. In addition to these, however, Bing, Tipp & Co., Günthermann, Distler and Fleischmann also marketed a large selection of figures in the initial years of production. While today these manufacturers enjoy more of a reputation for their trains and automobiles, some of the most handsome figures actually came from them. Thanks to hand painting, the figures from Günthermann and Bing developed a charm that could not be achieved by lithography.

The most significant and renowned manufacturer was undoubtedly Ernst Paul Lehmann, who is seen by many collectors as the king of the tin toy.

No less significant, but today much less well-known and much rarer, are the figures from

**Leonhard Staudt**, who primarily produced music-playing clowns, circus artistes and animals.

Many of his clowns were adorned with fabric or even silk clothing over their tin bodies. They were often bigger and more complex than those of the competition – some of them even had multi-part musical mechanisms, and were therefore also more expensive. This is certainly one of the main reasons for their rarity today.

**Eberl** and **Fischer** are renowned for their humorous depictions, with well-known comic heroes and figures from the world of fables, fairy tales and fantasy included in their ranges.

We have **Köhler** to thank for a final highlight in the world of figure toys. From 1932 onwards, the company primarily produced simple picking and hopping animals, but in the 1950s and 1960s the range comprised over 70 mechanical tin figures. Many of these, such as the raven, the songbird and the quacking duck, were fitted with a complicated mechanism that facilitated several simultaneous or consecutive sequences of movements. Up to six different functions were possible, a rare achievement even for a battery-operated toy. Köhler figures are popular not only for their wide range of functions, but also due to their masterful lithography. Later Köhler products are already heralds of a new age, with complicated small parts such as bird's feet already being made from plastic. By the 1960s, for some figures only the insides were made of metal.

**Siegfried Günthermann** was a German craftsman who founded the company S. Günthermann – Mechanische Blechspielwarenfabrik. From 1877 onwards he worked as a one-man operation to produce tin toys by hand in a small workshop. These toys included riders on wheels, bathtubs and fully equipped bathrooms. In 1878, the business expanded and moved into bigger premises. In the beginning, hand-painted, and later also lithographed, tin figures, cars, racing cars, carriages, pull-along trains and fire engines were produced, with the large majority being exported to the USA. The toys were initially fitted with a coil-spring mechanism, which was later replaced by a clockwork mechanism. These new mechanisms were originally obtained abroad before the company started producing them itself in 1883. Mechanical animals, parrots and other singing birds enjoyed great popularity. Günthermann died in 1886, leaving the business to his widow, who initially ran it herself and subsequently together with her second husband, the businessman Adolf Weigel. Under Weigel, the initials "A W" were added to the company logo, originally a circle with the letters "S G" against a background reminiscent of a coat of arms. Business was excellent, and in 1901 the company employed a workforce of around 250. Weigel died in 1920, with his widow again inheriting the company. The management of the company was entrusted to one of Weigel's sons, who reverted to the old "S G" company logo. After the war the company also made a name for itself abroad with highly detailed models of limousines, buses, rollers and utility vehicles. Due to the lack of a successor in the Günthermann/Weigel family, the company was acquired by Siemens in 1965 and ultimately wound up.

**Gebrüder Bing, Nürnberg**, was founded in 1864 by the brothers Ignaz (1840–1918) and Adolf Bing. The company initially produced metal goods, but by the beginning of the 20th century it had evolved into the world's largest toy manufacturer. Trained "Bing salesmen" worked the entire European market, and even managed to conquer the USA. From 1908 onwards, the company claimed the title of the world's leading toy manufacturer, an achievement that was honoured at the national exhibitions. The company went bankrupt in 1929 in the wake of the global economic crisis, with the name acquired in the liquidation process being maintained from 1932 onwards by an automotive supplier specialising in carburettors.

**E. P. Lehmann Patentwerk** is one of the really big names in toy history. Founded in 1881 by Ernst Paul Lehmann in Brandenburg an der Havel, the company quickly gained international fame with its originally designed mechanical tin toys. Cars, lorries, airships and an abundance of comical moving animal and human figures delighted generations of children. Easily a third of the pre-war models produced by this world-renowned company were figures, and it is not only the almost ubiquitous company logo that makes them unmistakable. Many models were produced in huge numbers over a period of more than 30 years. This and their extraordinary robustness could well explain why, with the exception of a few rarities, the "Lehmans" continue to be found frequently today. Despite this, Lehmann figures sell at top prices in comparison to other manufacturers. In 1881 a "patent exhibition" was held in Frankfurt, where inventors were given the opportunity to present their latest products to the public – one of these inventors was Ernst Paul Lehmann, who took home several prizes for his brilliant and intricate creations. Due to some unpleasant experiences from the company's first years, he only produced toys with patent protection, thereby

preventing copycats – professional and otherwise – from exploiting his work. This also constituted a further advantage for sales: as soon as a patent or a protected technical mechanism was used in a toy, no other rival could come close. When, from 1887 onwards, the famous “Made in Germany” had to be printed on the packaging and the products as a result of English legislation, Ernst Paul Lehmann was one of the first Brandenburg manufacturers to register his own trademark with the district court. A partnership agreement between Ernst Paul Lehmann and his cousin Johannes Richter was signed in 1921, and when Ernst Paul Lehmann died on 10 July 1934 at the age of 78, Johannes Richter became the sole owner of the company. Difficult times followed from 1933 onwards, with the National Socialist government demanding from Johannes Richter that the company take on armament contracts. Right up to the end of the War in 1945, however, Johannes Richter succeeded in limiting his company’s production exclusively to toys.

Political circumstances meant that Johannes Richter’s days as the head of his own business were numbered. On 25 April 1948 he received a letter from the council of the City of Brandenburg, informing him of complete confiscation, with no right to damages. Following a 67-year history, the company Ernst Paul Lehmann no longer existed. It became a publicly owned operation that even today continues to produce at the same location that Ernst Paul Lehmann had built following the big fire around the turn of the 20th century.

Johannes Richter travelled to Berlin with his wife and children in 1948, and was able to take just a few documents and possessions with him. Despite having nothing left, he decided to reopen the tin-toy factory. Thanks to his good reputation and his standing as a renowned expert in the German toy industry, he was granted a loan from the banks and the state for a total of 20,000 marks, and the foundation for a new existence was laid. Richter started from scratch, with the goal of bringing the company he had lost in Brandenburg back to life in Nuremberg. Johannes Richter died in 1956 at the age of 74. Hard times were in store for his sons Wolfgang and Eberhard Richter, with the Asians overrunning the global market with accurate copies of Lehmann products. The two brothers decided to take a major business risk and go for broke, putting all their money on the LGB (Lehmann-Garten-Bahn) garden model railway. Their courage and decisiveness were rewarded, with LGB carrying on the Lehmann tradition from 1968 onwards and achieving success throughout the world.

**Theodor F. Märklin** founded Germany’s most renowned toy factory in Göppingen in 1859. Märklin’s programme initially comprised small toys of all kinds, as well as stoves for doll kitchens. Over time, the company expanded and introduced a wide range of superbly produced toys.

The **Schuco** company was founded in Nuremberg in 1912 by Heinrich Schreyer and the toolmaker Heinrich Müller under the name of Schreyer and Co. Heinrich Müller had previously worked as a pattern maker for the German teddy bear manufacturer Bing. Initially, the company produced mechanical tin toys such as animals, marching soldiers, clowns and other figures. It was highly successful and soon relocated to a larger production facility. Production had to be discontinued on the outbreak of the First World War, and recommenced in 1918 once the War had ended. In the meantime, Müller had joined forces with his new partner Adolf Kahn and found a new production site in Nuremberg. The name Schuco, a derivation of Schreyer und Co., was registered as a trademark in 1921.

The famous collection of “yes-no bears” was launched in 1921. The bears were first presented at the Leipzig Spring Toy Fair, and continued to be produced throughout the company’s history, with the exception of an interruption due to the Second World War.

In 1936, the company introduced the first Schuco car to the market, amazing the experts with the technical precision and exceptional features of the miniatures. During the same year, the company’s workforce passed the 100 mark. The inventor and company owner Heinrich Müller took the mechanical finesse of the soon-to-be world-renowned model cars to ever-new heights, developing mechanical gearboxes, steering wheels and handbrakes. In 1939 his partner Kahn was forced to emigrate to New York due to his Jewish origins, but continued his business association with Schuco. Production of pre-war models recommenced following the Second World War, and new toys were soon added.

Upon the death of company founder Heinrich Müller in 1958, his son Werner Müller took over the business. Schuco was, however, unable to keep up with the Japanese competition, and was sold to the British toy manufacturer DCM (Dunbee-Combex-Marx) in the 1970s.

The company **Tipp & Co.** was founded in 1912 in the toy-making city of Nuremberg, with the aim of producing tin figures and mechanical toys – products that were particularly popular with young boys at the beginning of the 20th century. Following the difficulties experienced in the initial years, the company went on to become the German market leader in the tin-toy industry under the aegis of Philipp Ullmann from 1919. Production was focused on vehicles, cars and aeroplanes in particular. Tipp & Co. accompanied and documented the unstoppable rise of motorised mobility on land, in the water and in the air, translating all the groundbreaking achievements made in the area of automotive technology into the miniature world of the toy. Alongside the sophisticated, lifelike technology of the small motors, wheels and mechanisms that were produced to such a high standard, it is particularly the link to the zeitgeist that made the toys so popular for both playing and collecting. Concessions to the political rulers were, however, included, with the company, much like most toy manufacturers around this time, also happy to serve the National Socialist military cause with the appropriate products from 1933 onwards. However, Ullmann, who was Jewish, had had to leave Germany before going on to found the company Mettoy in England in 1933. There he proceeded to manufacture toys that clearly bore his signature and that of Tipp & Co. Once the War was over, Tippco stopped producing war toys. During the economic boom of the years immediately following the war, the focus of production shifted to lorries, fire engines, construction machines and buses, with the addition of miniature cash registers, typewriters, household appliances and doll’s houses. While the use of plastic was also introduced, the quality craftsmanship and the high functionality of the toys were undiminished. The company came to an end in 1971, after having gradually receded into the background from the mid-1960s onwards.

**Max Carl** toy company. In the Thuringian municipality of Judenbach, Gottfried Wilhelm Döring produced toy animals made of papier mâché and covered with plush. In 1892, Döring’s son Heinrich Bernhard Döring and his wife took over the business. On the death of Heinrich Döring in 1924, the textiles salesman Max Carl took on the company and continued to manage it under the name “Heinrich Döring Nachf.”. The first mechanical toys were produced during this time.

The process of manufacturing mechanical toys began to change from 1926 onwards. Papier-mâché bodies were replaced by machine-produced cardboard ones, which also resulted in an increase in variety. Dampened cardboard was pressed into a heated iron mould using a pressing machine with a stamper, and shaped into a hollow body consisting of two halves. The drive mechanism was inserted into the one half, and the other half was attached using staples. The drive mechanisms used in the figures and animals came from the Nuremberg firms Paul Weiss (until 1957), Tipp & Co. and Gebrüder Bühler (until 1988), while tin parts such as musical instruments were sourced from the Zirndorf company Wünnerlein & Co. (Wüco). The first music-playing monkeys came onto the market between 1930 and 1936. With their highly complicated mechanisms, animals such as bears, donkeys and elephants that walked on all fours and moved their heads became a speciality of Max Carl. In addition, the firm produced larger-scale showpieces for decoration purposes in department stores, including a cow with milkable udders – and equipped with a milking stool and bucket. Toy production was discontinued during the Second World War, with the company focusing exclusively on material for the military. Incidentally, this also applies to all other toy manufacturers.

Following the Second World War, Carl's son Helmut joined the company. As it was almost impossible to import material into the Soviet Occupation Zone where the firm was now located, drive mechanisms for the manufacture of mechanical toys were developed on site. Production was intended exclusively for the Eastern European market. The company was confiscated in 1952, at which point the Carl family fled to Coburg-Creidlitz in West Germany. A monkey's head with the initials M and C was introduced as the company's trademark in 1953, and continued to be seen in modified form up until 1970.

The business was forced to compete not only with West German toy manufacturers, but also with doll production by Sonni, the publicly owned successor company that had carried on production using the machines and materials left behind by Max Carl. In 1956, however Sonni was already obliged to discontinue production.

Production of the monkey orchestra recommenced in 1954, with around 15 million individual musicians being manufactured over a period of some 40 years and sold in almost all countries of the world.

Following the difficult initial years, the company developed rapidly through innovation, skilled marketing and a new sales channel. The range of mechanical animals in particular was continuously expanded, increasing from an initial 50 to a total of 150 by 1970.

The company logo was changed in 1970, with the red-and-white shield bearing the lettering "CARL original" and a simplified monkey symbol. Two years later, the existing cardboard bodies were replaced by plastic ones, and the attractive, colourful cardboard boxes were superseded by window packaging.

On the occasion of the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Carl signed a licence agreement to produce the mascot Waldi, designed by Otl Aicher. In 1973, the company employed a workforce of around 200 at its production sites in Creidlitz, Coburg and Aschau am Chiemsee. Many metal parts were replaced by plastic around this time, and in 1975 the plastic wind-up key superseded the metal one, and the metal drum gave way to the plastic version.



The last company catalogue was published in 1987, and two years later the sale of figures was transferred to the Zirndorf tin-toy manufacturer Lorenz Bolz. Due to his advanced age, Helmut Carl brought his company's 100-year-old history of toy production to an end in 1992.

### **Manufacturers in Europe and the United States**

The French toy, doll and mechanical-toy industry thrived in Paris, where in the early days homeworkers were employed to produce metal parts for which they often had to scavenge material from rubbish tips, just like in Germany. Also in France, the women were paid poorly for this work. An exciting selection of tin toys emerged from French factories, particularly those produced by the company **Fernand Martin**. Martin had been fascinated by technology ever since his childhood, and in 1880 his factory on Boulevard de Ménilmontant in Paris employed a workforce of over 200 individuals who produced around 8,000 mechanical toy figures each year, up until the outbreak of the First World War. The figures could walk, perform acrobatic tricks and one could even play the piano. Many of them had just a simple rubber band mechanism, while others were fitted with a clockwork mechanism. The tin characters produced included Le Clochard (Tramp) and Ivrogne (Toper or Drunk). The company's trademark was F.M. In 1892, Fernand Martin set out as one of the first players to industrialise the toy production process. In the early years of the 20th century, when moving toys were bought primarily by the rich, his toys could be afforded by the average citizen. Alongside these, he also produced figures of everyday life.

Extremely attractive tin toys were also produced in Russia. In addition to a wide range of wind-up figures, various plush animals with cardboard and tin bodies, similar to those from Carl and Schuco, were produced at the end of the 1950s. Often in the guise of animals in human form, often in typical Russian folk costumes, the earlier pieces of the 1950s were generally of excellent quality and with a range of functions.

### **The popular Bimbo-Box**

The Bimbo-Box monkey orchestra, the jukebox with music-playing monkeys, was introduced in 1954. The monkeys came from the company Max Carl, while the box was built by Walter Talk in Magstadt near Stuttgart. There were not just music-playing monkeys, but also orchestras of cats, rabbits and bears. The boxes were produced in a 1950s design, and, in addition to the large edition, a smaller version with fewer figures was also available.

With their music-playing animals, these boxes were intended more as entertainment for children than as real jukeboxes. They were produced with a 20- or 30-disc mechanism, and later also with a continuous audio tape that played up to 150 different pieces of music. The monkeys moved in time to the music thanks to a mechanical cam control.

Visitors will be able to find out for themselves that the Bimbo-Box monkey orchestra not only looks good but can also sound good. Don't miss the jukebox monkey ensemble, rocking to the music for your entertainment!

### **Moving toys and the passion of their collectors**

Today, toy collecting is a highly popular hobby that has given rise to countless toy markets and auctions. But why are toys from the past in such high demand? Most of us are familiar with the unexplainable drive to collect, and this drive can be satisfied by a hobby like this. Mechanical toys

are like little time machines that tell us a great deal about the craftsmanship of a bygone lifestyle and its atmosphere. The toys produced around 1900 provided a particularly informative picture of the era in which they were created: all the steam trains and railway stations, ocean liners, horseless carriages and flying machines in all their glorious detail. Many of the specimens that have survived function as a miniature document of a pioneering age of invention.

The main motivation for collecting tin toys, however, is most likely nothing other than pure nostalgia. Memories of our past childhoods are reawakened the moment we have the opportunity to pick up a long-lost, much-loved toy.

In terms of investment, toys would appear to offer excellent future prospects. As interest increases, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find good examples, and particularly some very early, classic pieces in excellent condition are already proving prohibitively expensive. It goes without saying, however, that pieces that have been expertly restored are also worthy of collection, provided a large proportion of the original toy has been preserved.

In principle, toy collecting is the same all over the world, and only varies according to the enthusiasm with which the "native" articles are met. Naturally, childhood memories vary not only from person to person but also from country to country, depending on the selection of toys available in each case. Given the large quantities distributed throughout the world, children were more familiar with German toys than with products from any other country. Toys from other countries were actually only popular in their own country of origin, and were exported in only limited quantities. A young English boy was given a Hornby railway from English production or a German manufacturer. Childhood possessions such as these unquestionably create lasting memories, so it is completely natural that British collectors prefer to search for Hornby products or German railways.

### **Mechanical bears**

In the late 1880s, toy manufacturers were being inspired by the ubiquitous real dancing bears of the time to produce a matching mechanical toy. Roullet-Decamps was one of the first to do so, introducing its mechanical bears in the late 1880s. Given the company's existing experience in the manufacture of mechanical dolls, it was very quick to come up with an appealing selection of bears that could dance, play musical instruments, fill a glass with water and drink it – and even smoke cigarettes. The bears were covered with rabbit fur, and these fantastic toys remained highly popular for half a century.

Another French manufacturer, Fernand Martin, developed the first mechanical bears to be covered with plush shortly before 1900. This clockwork bear (approximately 18 centimetres high) was on sale for almost 50 years.

Most experts agree today that the "Century of the Child" began around 1900, with the hub of this toy-based century forming in Germany. The Bing brothers began with the first mechanical teddy bears, which were later followed by the Schuco versions.

### **Japanese mechanical and battery-operated toys**

Before the outbreak of the First World War, most mechanical toys came from Germany and France. After the war, however, a new country entered the arena: Japan. The first Japanese objects were straightforward copies of existing toys from Europe and America, but had a major advantage over

the originals: the manufacturers' lower wage and material costs made them significantly cheaper. This enabled Japanese toy companies to conquer a large share of the market. During the Second World War, all countries had other priorities than toy production. The toy industry represented a way out of a crisis for Japan following the country's defeat in the war – away from armaments and towards the manufacture of civilian goods. Raw materials were scarce, and efforts were made to invest in various sectors using recyclable remnants of the war, with the help of large quantities of eager manpower and limitless creativity, the results of which could ultimately even be exported. Even before the war, the toy industry had already been a major tradition. However, the colourful celluloid products, fitted primarily with mechanical mechanisms, had been strongly oriented towards the domestic market. After the war, products for export had to bear the label "Made in occupied Japan", with a view to promoting the boycott, in America in particular, of these goods from the former enemy country. Due to their originality and low prices, however, the products were nevertheless extremely popular, and the special labelling was soon seen as a "seal of quality". The shift in the toy industry from celluloid to tin toys was the result of the import of beverage cans and metal containers for the occupying troops. A further milestone was the use of small 3-volt electric motors and the newly emerging D-cell batteries. There were no longer any limits to the creativity of the Japanese, with mechanical gear-wheel systems facilitating fascinating movements, and lights, electromagnets, smoke generators, fans, voices and music being integrated into these modern moving toys.

With a view to enticing US consumers in particular to buy, familiar figures such as a whole range of comic figures, cowboys and Indians, clowns and Santas, etc. were produced.

The punched and pressed tin parts of the moving toys were covered with fabric, plush, fur or felt and, in order to simplify the transport process, each figure received a special brightly printed cardboard box with English labelling and humorous illustrations. Some funny names were invented – and even if they were not always spelled correctly, this had no impact on the success of the product.

Over 95 per cent of these toys were exported to the United States, and were delivered not only to big department stores but also to street sellers, who were in a better position to present the toys in motion. At Christmas time in particular, millions of these new, fascinating but inexpensive moving toys changed hands on the street. At the same time, business with D-cell batteries was booming, as theirs was the power needed to bring the moving toys to life.

Many of these toys, however, lasted no longer than just a few weeks. Most cardboard boxes were torn apart as the toy was unpacked, and after just a few hours' use the children had lost interest, particularly because the batteries also quickly ran out of steam. The lifespan of the batteries in use at the time cannot be compared with those around today. This made the children all the more interested in finding out what the mechanism underneath looked like – and the plush fabric was quickly removed. Others stowed the toys, together with their packaging, in their attics, unfortunately often forgetting to remove the batteries, which leaked and destroyed the toy's tin interior with their acid.

Of the many millions of battery-operated toys produced, few have survived in good condition, and these have become sought-after collector's items. Functioning toys in their original packaging often sell for prices a hundred times higher than what was originally paid. The original box was important

for the toys, as the operating instructions, accessories and the toy's name were usually only printed on the boxes.

### **The movements (actions) of Japanese battery-operated toys**

The value of a battery-operated toy is based not only on its condition, rarity and popularity, but also on the number of movements or actions it can perform. It can perform one or several consecutive actions such as walking, drinking, blowing up a balloon, smoking, opening and closing its eyes and much more. A distinction is made between toys with up to two actions and those with three or more.

### **The distribution of Japanese moving toys**

Given that most of the toys produced in Japan were intended for the US or European markets, international distribution companies were commissioned to organise the dispatch of these thousands of toys. Cragstan, Linemar, Rosko and Illfelder were some of the biggest international distributors and importers. This explains why the stamps on Japanese moving toys were often not those of the producers but of the distribution companies or dealers.

The decline in the production of Japanese moving toys began in the late 1960s. There were several reasons for this: rising wage costs, more restrictive safety requirements, and inflation and competition from even cheaper markets, usually with products made with a combination of tin and plastic. In terms of beauty, these new products could not compare with the Japanese toys, and the combined use of tin and plastic led to a dramatic drop in quality.

### **Who were the Japanese producers?**

Early Japanese manufacturers such as the Masutoku Toy Factory (later Masudaya Toy Co.), founded in 1924, with the logo "M-T" or "Modern Toy", and Nomura Toys Ltd., founded in 1923, with the logo "T.N", are believed to be the first designers, developers and manufacturers of hundreds of different moving toys.

Alps Shoji Co. Ltd. (Alps Toy Midzuno Co.) with the logo "ALPS", founded in 1948, and Marusan Co. with the logo "SAN", founded in 1946, are also known to have developed new Japanese battery-operated toys.

**T.P.S. Tokyo Plaything Shokai (Toplay T.P.S. Ltd.), Japan**, was founded around 1956 as Toplay Ltd., and was also known as Tokyo Playthings Ltd. The company's logo consisted of three fingers and the three letters T.P.S., and the company produced highly attractive and colourful lithographed tin toys for children. The mechanical toys often comprised a humorous combination of interesting and sophisticated sequences of movement, and company founder Yoshio Udagawa's main aim was that they brought a smile to children's faces. The products manufactured by Toplay Ltd. were some of the best tin toys available in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The initials T.P.S. were derived from the official Japanese name **T**okyo **P**laything **S**hokai. The logo, with its three outstretched fingers, symbolises the three original founders of the company. The first toy produced by T.P.S. was the "Clown on Roller Skates". The company disappeared from the scene around 1975.

**Alps Shoji Co. Ltd., Japan,** was founded in Tokyo in 1948, and primarily manufactured cars and novelties made from tin and tinplate, many of them battery operated. The mountain logo with the lettering "ALPS" is a highly familiar one. Toy production appears to have come to an end in the 1970s.

### **Tin toys today**

Tin figures are still being manufactured today, and are not, as many believe, replicas or fakes, but original toys that have either remained in production or been newly introduced. After having discontinued production or switched to other products, various German manufacturers sold their plants to companies abroad, primarily to Eastern Europe and Asia. There, alongside numerous proprietary developments, various figures that were previously produced in Germany are now being manufactured again, usually in a slightly modified form. German companies such as Lehmann and Schopper also continue to produce figures.

A small firm is again manufacturing the tin toys previously sold by Tipp & Co., Blomer & Schüler and Nürnberger Blechspielzeugwarenfabrik. The sale of machinery and the continuation of production by other firms were also common in the past.

The range of figures currently available on the market comprises around 100 models, some of which are even hand-painted, and many of which are interesting and novel.

### **Facts & figures**

Opening hours.

Museum, shop and restaurant  
from 10.00–18.00 daily

The Swiss and Upper Rhine Museum Passes are valid for the Toy Worlds Museum Basle.

Admission.

CHF 7.00/5.00

Children up to 16 years of age are admitted free of charge and only in the company of adults.

No additional charge for the special exhibition.

The entire building is wheelchair-accessible.

### **Media contact**

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