One of the most serious things is the toy. Every child and every parent, especially around Christmas, knows this, and it is unfortunate that some people, who presumably have forgotten that they ever were children, keep calling unnecessary objects “toys,” and even toys “unnecessary objects.” Indeed, toys – things that are brought to life by imagination – are means for creating a world. They rise from the same imagination that brings forth man’s greatest accomplishments: religion, art, civilization itself; and it is, in fact, very often quite impossible to say whether miniature representations of human beings, animals, or objects of daily life that have come to us from ancient times or alien cultures were meant to be votive offerings (i.e. religious objects), or _objets d’art_, or “simply” toys.

The natural toys for a girl are dolls, with whom she creates a family life reflecting all the joys and calamities of the other, “real” world; the obvious toys for a boy are miniature warriors, with whom he is a leader of men – literally having a whole army in the grasp of his hand – to wage pitched battles in front of the fireplace, and to conduct adventurous quests to the farthest end of the rug.

Of course, as again every parent knows, toys are subject to much use with little chance of survival, and it is therefore not surprising that of these ancient armies very few stragglers have escaped the terrible battleground of the nursery floor. Only relatively recently has the military miniature become an object for systematic collecting by serious connoisseurs (thus saving untold regiments from murderous peashots), but these collectors, of course, frown upon the idea of calling model soldiers toys.
It is reported that boys in ancient Greece played with little wooden Trojan horses filled with warriors (an ingenious way to solve the storage problem), but no trace is left of them. On the other hand, many clay figurines have come down to us from antiquity (Figure 1), and though most of them seem to have been votive offerings, it is reasonable to assume that the contemporary toy soldiers were of similar appearance.

1 Mounted warrior, Greek (Cyprus), late VII century B.C. Painted terracotta, height 7½ inches. The Cesnola Collection, purchased by subscription, 74.51.1778

Though this unusual equestrian statuette (Figure 2) has lost its horse, and though its right hand, which presumably brandished a spear, is broken off, it is still very dashing, in fine Byzantine armor and draped cloak. On closer examination the figure is seen to be clad in Persian-style pantaloons and to have its hair done in a heavy bun at the nape of the neck; it is, therefore, apparently meant to be an Amazon. A hole pierces the left hand, where the reins of the horse could be threaded through, and another hole is in the seat to fit a peg on the horse's saddle, the same way that many modern lead soldiers are attached to their mounts. The original purpose of this charming little rider, who was found in Istanbul, is not clear. It, too, might have been a votive statuette, but perhaps it was the precious toy of a little prince: its fine execution, the careful casting and chiseling, makes it a rather costly item—a full troop of them must have been a splendid sight indeed.

2 Equestrian figure, Byzantine (Istanbul), IV-V century. Bronze, height 4½ inches. Gift of J. J. Klejman, 62.7.2
If there is some doubt as to whether the Byzantine Amazon was really a toy, there is none about these two small lead horsemen (Figure 5). They were both cast in the same mold, and therefore enable us to reconstruct their original appearance (Figure 4), though both have missing parts.

The casting was done very skillfully by means of a triple mold: two halves with the figure carved out on either side, and a wedge-shaped piece inserted between them from below in order to cast the body of the horse hollow and to splay its feet apart. There are tiny cast-on loops at the horse’s hooves to accommodate axles, so the whole could roll on wheels. Though the figure is rather stiff and stylized, the details are executed with great care: the steed’s breast strap is hung with spangles, and the tooling of the leather on harness and saddle, as well as the woven pattern of the rider’s dress, is indicated by delicate crosshatching.

In view of the extreme scarcity of medieval toy figures, it is remarkable that the two surviving specimens from this mold are in the same collection. One of them was dredged from the river.
Seine, which is, like the Thames, a particularly well suited place for small objects to turn up. Both of these sluggishly moving rivers were crossed by bridges lined with shops and booths, where things were likely to fall from windows or through cracks in floors, to be buried in the mud for centuries. The little horseman from the Seine once was thought to have carried a sword or lance in his broken-off hand, because the incised pattern of his dress was interpreted as a mail shirt; but by comparing him with the other it becomes clear that he too was a nobleman riding forth a-hunting with his falcon on his fist. The second came to the Museum mistakenly identified as Sasanian; being a true knight-errant, he traveled through various departments before he joined his twin brother in the Arms and Armor collection.

3 William the Conqueror as a falconer, in a typical pose, similar to Figure 5. Detail of the Bayeux Tapestry, late XI century. Bishop’s Palace, Bayeux. Photograph: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques

4 Reconstruction of the falconers in Figure 5

5 Falconers. French, xiii century. Lead, heights about 13½ inches. Rogers Fund, 12.22.2, and Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, funds from various donors, 29.158.736 e

6 The Three Kings, in costumes and on horses very similar to those in Figure 5. Detail of a painted altar frontal from Mosoll. Spanish (Catalonia), about 1200. Museo de Arte de Cataluña, Barcelona. Photograph: Mas

7 Falconer, in a costume and pose comparable to those in Figure 5. Ink drawing by Jean Pucelle from the Hours of Jeanne d’Evreux, French, 1325-1328. Actual size. The Cloisters Collection, 54.1.2

The ancestor of the true tin soldier is a splendid knight in full armor (Figure 8), who also came from the bottom of the Seine, and is now in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. Fortunately he has suffered only minor damage, and the scrupulously correct details of his armor and the harness of his horse date him about 1360-1370. His shield being emblazoned with a large cross, he looks very much like one of those flat equestrian figures worn as a badge by pilgrims who had visited a shrine of St. George (Figure 9). But he is molded on both sides, and the feet of his battle charger are firmly planted in cast-on quatrefoil bases, proof enough that he was meant to be a toy; perhaps the pewterer who cast him was indeed a maker of pilgrims’ tokens.


9 Fragments of pilgrims’ tokens of a shrine of St. George. Lead and pewter, heights about 1½ inches. Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, funds from various donors, 29.158.736 a, d, e
Their smallness and their often simplified form make these little figures sometimes rather hard to place. A strange-looking, rather battered horseman (Figure 10) of wafer-thin lead, crudely engraved on both sides, could easily pass for a similar toy made by a not over-ambitious master. After having puzzled medievalists and orientalists, however, it has turned out to be an early Chinese tomb figure from the period of the Six Dynasties.


Apparently the cast-tin figures of the Middle Ages could not compete with toys made of wood and clay—perhaps the restrictions and limitations of guild regulations made their production impractical: they disappear again until the eighteenth century. Alas, the worthy knights of wood have fallen into dust, and the chevaliers of clay have crumbled too. Occasionally we find a brass figurine, such as this horseman in Berlin (Figure 11). He too was probably a falconer, as indicated by the raised right arm that presumably once held a hawk. In the same collection is a small horse of the same size and material, bridled and harnessed, but without a saddle (Figure 12). Both figures are sculptured in the round, and they look very much like miniature aquamaniles, those medieval vessels used in pouring water over banqueters' hands. Since medieval miniature crockery does exist, it is even possible that they were toy aquamaniles for a girl's dollhouse.

11, 12 Mounted falconer and horse. Probably German, about 1400. Brass, height of falconer about 2 1/2 inches. Staatliche Museen der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
The most fascinating kind of toys are those that help along imagination by actions of their own, and figurines with movable arms or legs have been in use since earliest times. Important among these action toys are military ones executing the movements of the greatest spectacle of the days when knights were bold – the tournament. As early as the twelfth century appears a representation of two small sword fighters manipulated by strings (Figure 13).

13 Sword fight with puppets. Colored drawing (now destroyed) from the Hortus Deliciarum by the Abbess Herrad of Landsberg, German, late XII century. After facsimile by C. M. Engelhardt. Metropolitan Museum Library
The most glamorous—and for us the typical—part of the medieval tournament was the encounter of a pair of jousters on horseback. In the Emperor Maximilian’s autobiographical romance of chivalry, *Der Weisstunig*, a woodcut by Hans Burgkmair illustrates the games the emperor used to play as a boy (Figure 14). Here he is playing at tournaments with model jousters (the prince’s champion is the winner, of course).

14 “How the Old White King gave to his son several noble youths as companions to amuse themselves in merry pastimes,” by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1473–1531), German. Woodcut from Der Weisstunig (Vienna edition, reprinting the original blocks, 1775). 8½ x 7¼ inches. Metropolitan Museum Library

There are six similar toy jousters of brass or bronze still in existence in various European and American collections; most of them have lost their horses, which in some cases may have been made of perishable material. The unique example of a complete, matching pair has been preserved in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Figure 16); here the chargers are of brass too, with the lances made of wood, heightening the naturalistic effect when they splintered at the impact.

In Burgkmaier’s woodcut the toy horsemen stand without any visible support on a board laid out on the tabletop, and are being pushed against each other by hand. The Vienna jousters are mounted on bases with wheels, and they could be set in motion by a system of cords and pulleys attached to the underside of the carriages; this required considerable skill and made the sport even more competitive and exciting.

Five of these six figurines, including the ones illustrated here (Figures 15, 16), are equipped for the *Rennen*, a course run with sharp lances in light field armor with sallet, while one is armed for the *Gestech*, a course run with blunted lances and in heavy armor with great helm. The stylistic differences in their armor indicate that one must have been made around 1480, one around 1490, and the others around 1500. In spite of these variations, there are enough similarities between them to suggest that they all came from a common workshop in southern Germany; the most likely place would be the famous toy-making center of Nuremberg.


16 Pair of jousters. South German, about 1500. Brass, heights 5½ inches. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Prince Maximilian's jousters were apparently not made of solid brass. In the woodcut they are represented as if they were more naturalistic, with horse trappings of real fabric, and no doubt with armor of real steel; in fact, we know that in 1516 Maximilian, who was known as "the last of the knights," ordered such a pair of toy jousters to be made by Coloman Helmschmied of Augsburg, head of one of the most renowned armorer's workshops of the time, as a present for the young King Ludwig II of Hungary. In the Bavarian National Museum, Munich, a complete figure of this kind is still preserved (Figure 17).

It is meticulously exact in every detail. Its armor is that for the deutsche gemeine Gestech (this "German joust" was run in the open tiltyard without a barrier separating the charging combatants); only lance and shield are missing. The horse's equipment forms an especially valuable document, because not a single complete tournament outfit for a horse has survived. The bulky bolster stuffed with straw in front of its breast is a protection not only for the horse, but also for the rider's legs, in case of collision (only one actual bolster, in
the Waffensammlung in Vienna, is extant). The heavily padded blindfold prevents the horse from shying and spoiling the jouter’s aim; and the long streamers dangling from the horse’s ears are another characteristic feature of the trappings used in this joust. A second helm, of a different type (shown beside the horse in our illustration), indicates that originally other interchangeable pieces of armor existed, in order that the little jouter might be outfitted for different forms of tournament. In the Musée de l’Armée in Paris, there is an almost identical figure, though without its horse, which seems to have been the partner of the Munich knight.

A toy like this was of course tremendously expensive, and only the very rich, either members of the high nobility or the merchant-princes of wealthy cities, could have afforded it. It is not surprising that the now-tattered silken trappings of the little knight in Munich are emblazoned with the arms of one of Nuremberg’s most important patrician families. (An Italian cardinal traveling in the fifteenth century once wryly remarked that the kings of Scotland would certainly be more than happy to live like a moderately well-to-do citizen of Nuremberg.)

17 Jouter, his crest and horse trappings displaying the armorial bearings of the Holzschuer family of Nuremberg, South German (probably Nuremberg), first half of the xvi century. Horse and puppet of wood, with fabric trappings and steel armor; height about 12 inches. Bavarian National Museum, Munich

18 Jousting armor for man and horse. German, about 1500. Rogers Fund, 04.3.291

19 A member of the Holzschuer family (left) participating in a tournament at Nuremberg. Colored drawing in a manuscript tournament book, south German (Nuremberg), second half of the xvi century. 9 7/8 x 13 3/8 inches. Metropolitan Museum Library
Miniature suits of armor have occasionally been made, mostly for purposes not clearly known. Some might have been collector’s items for Kunstschränke, “curiosity cabinets”; others were perhaps a tour de force to show the master’s skill, or an exhibit for an armorer’s shop window. Connoisseurs are generally very reluctant to classify them as toys, mainly because of the high quality of their workmanship (although the armor of the Munich knight is just as proudly made as these). In our collection there are two miniature suits of armor (Figures 21, 22), probably manufactured in Italy during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. They were certainly not meant to be used as the equipment of jousting figures, because they represent a type of armor worn not by a noble in a tourney but by the heavy cavalryman in the field, and at a period when the brace of saddle pistols was making the lance obsolete.

There is, however, a woodcut in a series dated 1587 illustrating children’s games and toys (Figure 23) that shows a boy leading a small dog harnessed as a battle horse and ridden by a manikin in armor. The saddled dog is good evidence that this little knight was the boy’s own toy, and not purloined from Father’s collection; at the same time it might explain the scarcity of horses to go with the miniature armor.

21, 22 Miniature suits of armor. Italian, second quarter of the xvii century. Steel, brass, and leather; heights 20 inches. Gift of the estate of Jermain S. Duncan, 65.95.1, 2

23 Armored puppet riding on a saddled dog. Woodcut from Trente-six Figures contenant tous les jeux (Paris, 1587). Figure 10 in Model Soldiers by John G. Garratt (Seeley Service & Co. Ltd., London, n.d.)
With romantic ruins in Gothic style being erected in parks, historical novels in medieval settings flourishing, and re-creations of the past like the Eglington Tournament (1839) being held, the knight recaptured his place among the favorite toys of children. In a German ballad of 1849 celebrating the toyshop at the Christmas Fair (Figure 25), the knight in shining armor on his fiery steed is mentioned long before the apparently far less exciting hussars, uhlans, and grenadiers.

Tournaments and knights went out of fashion, and toymakers made every effort to keep their products up to date. With the development of standing armies the steadfast tin soldier made his appearance. He was truly the model soldier of the formal-minded eighteenth century: every man exactly like the other, every step frozen in exactly the same motion, every musket set at exactly the same angle—a drill sergeant’s dream come true. The tin soldier started to beat everything else out of the field in popularity. His stiff uniformity even invaded the design of toy soldiers in other media (paper, for instance), and the traditional wooden toys had to recruit lathe-turned battalions for their defense.

Of course, there were attempts to break the all-too-rigid pattern, as, for example, during the neoclassic period, when Goethe described a toy-soldier battle fought between Greeks and Amazons, but these occasional efforts were of only minor influence until the romantic revival in the early nineteenth century, when the knights came charging back full tilt (Figure 24).

24 Knights in combat, by Carl Ludwig Bezold, German (Nuremberg), about 1830-1840. Painted pewter, with movable arms; heights about 3 inches. Germanic National Museum, Nuremberg

25 Toyshop at the Christmas Fair, by Ludwig Richter (1803-1884), German. Engraving from Kinderlieder (Leipzig, 1849). 6¼ x 4¼ inches. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 32.72
During the eighteen-thirties and forties, both the tin soldier and the paper soldier had to make a strategic advance to the rear before the onslaught of printed knights eagerly waiting to be colored and cut out. On the sheet illustrated here (Figure 26) the ranks are swelled by knightly saints, as for example St. George and St. Andrew (in tartan plaid and kilt), but all the truly romantic figures appear as well—the Champion with the Gauntlet of Challenge, the Black Knight, and the Blood-red Knight.

Redington's New Twelves Horses. British (London), about 1840-1850. Engraving, partly hand-colored; 7 1/8 x 9 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William B. Liebman, 55.576.27 (6)

Historicism became so fashionable and the demand for medieval objects so great that again miniature suits of armor were made (Figure 27), but this time strictly for collectors—Victorian fathers being what they were, there was not much chance that little boys were allowed to play with these polished worthies, even as a reward for exemplary goodness. Some unscrupulous specialists even went so far as to forge “medieval” toy figurines for the specialists among collectors.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the more solid lead soldier succeeded in taking over the place of the flat tin soldier (who now became an object of adults' collecting). The toymakers were quick to follow not only all changes of modern uniforms and equipment, but also current events – the Balkan wars, the Boer War, the Spanish-American War, etc. Undaunted by these often very short-lived fashions, little knights, now turned out by practically every major toymaking company, continued to win the hearts of boys.

Even during the recent process of conversion to plastic materials, when many of the old Victorian soldier types were abandoned, the knights held their ground. Their shining armor and colorful coats of arms are still attractive against the khaki drabness of modern uniforms. And the numberless technical toys that make modern games interesting – tanks, planes, missiles – can easily be counterbalanced by castles, siege machines, and throwing engines. Therefore even in our space age Prince Valiant and his sword-brothers will be riding forth under the Christmas tree and over the living-room table.

28 Knights and men-at-arms, by Georg Heyde, German (Dresden), after 1870. Painted lead, riders detachable from horses; heights about 2½ inches. Private collection, Dresden
Notes

During the month of December the Metropolitan Museum will open two major exhibitions of American watercolors. Two Hundred Years of Watercolor Painting in America, commemorating the centennial of the founding of the American Watercolor Society, will be on view in the Harry Payne Bingham Special Exhibition Galleries from December 8 through January 29. It is comprised of two sections, one a historical survey of American watercolors from 1757 to 1966, the second a selection of 78 watercolors by present members of the American Watercolor Society. Of the 250 watercolors by 107 artists that make up the retrospective part of the exhibition, 166 are from the Museum's permanent collection; the rest are loans from 39 private collectors and artists.

The following week, on December 13, 101 Masterpieces of American Primitive Watercolors and Pastels from the Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch will open in the American Wing. Selected from the large collection of American primitives assembled by Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch over the past 25 years, the exhibition will show not only the wide range of subjects treated by American folk artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also the great variety of techniques that they used. Following the exhibition here, which will run through February 13, these watercolors will travel to a number of museums throughout the United States. Illustrated catalogues of both exhibitions will be available.

New Qualifications for Membership in the Corporation

At the annual meeting of the Corporation on October 17, 1966, Article I of the Constitution was amended to increase the amounts of contributions required to qualify persons for election in the Corporation: from $50,000 to $100,000 for Benefactor, from $5,000 to $10,000 for Fellow in Perpetuity, and from $1,000 to $2,000 for Fellow for Life. These changes become effective March 31, 1967.

D.T.E., Jr.