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That's a Wrap: Toy Fair Market Report

We came, we saw, we played. Here's the scoop on how this year's show shaped up.



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Who says that kids are the only ones who can enjoy a new toy? Sure, we spotted a gaggle of pint-sized toy testers from *The Ellen Show*, hugging oversized plush and building with Legos, and a bunch of kid influencers with mom and dad in tow. But it was the miles of smiles on the faces of retail buyers and suppliers that affirmed our belief that the 117th American International Toy Fair was indeed a winning event.

With nary a snowflake in sight—defying past Toy Fair experiences—unseasonably warm weather seemed to put a spring in buyers’ steps and contributed to brisk foot traffic. Despite the cancelled China Pavilion and initial fears over how the coronavirus would impact attendance, scores of buyers were more than ready to place their orders. “We put on our retail hats to market the strength of those who brought in their product,” says Kate Tanner, owner of Kidstop Toys & Books in Scottsdale, Ariz., who was pleasantly surprised by the number of exhibitors with finished product. “It was refreshing to work with vendors that have containers in right now,” she added.



Kate Greene, owner of The Gingerbread House in Bloomington, Ill. was also enthused by this year’s show. “We thought the fair definitely had an upbeat vibe,” she says. “We loved all of the tie-dye...definitely going to fit in our boho store.” Greene also noticed vendors’ focus on sustainability. “It seemed like most lines were steering more towards creating eco-friendly packaging and toys,” she noted, citing Fashion Angels, Plan Toys, Tegu and Ann Williams.

As for toys that caught retailers’ attention, there were plenty of contenders. Tanner enjoyed seeing so many new entrepreneurs, including ZipChip Sports, makers of a pocket-sized, high-flying disk that can also float. “Getting kids off the couch and into the yard is perfect this time of year in Arizona,” she says of her search for active toys.



Greene, meanwhile, got her hands (literally) on Crazy Aaron's Land of Dough line of sustainable dough made with organic essential oils, compostable glitter and eco-friendly packaging. Favorite selections include Bacon & Eggs, Zebra Party and Mermaid Lagoon. Packaged in a giftable box with a clear top and wooden scoop for easy mixing, the Land of Dough collection is the ideal crossover product for any retailer that is looking to introduce their customers to the next level of tactile play.

Prevalent Play

During the show, trend-seeking toy buyers had plenty of opportunities to check out some of the emerging themes. Here's our take on what you can expect to see on store shelves in the coming months:



Tropical paradise. Call it the global warming experience of toy design, if you will. Warm weather is the hot topic in the toy aisle this year, with motifs of flamingos and fresh scents of coconut and pineapples creating permanent staycations for kids and parents alike. Favorite picks include Squishmallows huggable plush pineapple, ALEX's Knot-a-Pineapple DIY activity kit, Klutz's Make Your Own Soaps set in a tropical tie-dye theme and Moose Toys' Gotta Go Flamingo, a talking, toilet-trained bird that kids can feed and watch as he does his (ahem) business.

Digi-kids influence. Little kids mean big business when it comes to driving toy innovation. YouTube sensations and social media darlings have moved from screen to shelves by lending their names to products that make playtime a truly interactive experience. Notable influences include Ryan's World (Far Out Toys' Surprise Reveal board game and Little Kids' inflatable sprinkler), Brielle Milla (Scientific Explorer's Brielle-ian Science kits) and Taylen Biggs (ALEX Spa's hair accessory kits).

Grown-up gifting. Tapping into the inner child mentality, toy makers know that their audience isn't strictly reserved for little ones. As health and wellness studies continue to stress the importance of adults unplugging from the stresses of daily life, products that promote a sense of calm and relaxation are attracting attention. Adding a playful vibe to the workplace is also popular for gift-giving at the office. Standout product picks are Ravensburger's 3D London Bus Puzzle (that doubles as a pencil holder), SpinMaster's Kinetic Sand Kalm and Crazy Aaron's rose-scented Scentsory Putty.

The sweet life. A food frenzy continues to dominate the toy market, spanning categories from plush to pretend play. But this year, we couldn't help but notice how many indulgences have a sugary bent to them. Popular picks include the Unicorn Ice Cream Cone plush macaroon from Douglas, the Food Surprise Yolkies from RedwoodVentures or the Klutz Sew Your Own Donut Animals set. For those retailers feeling "guilty," they can always balance out their cravings with healthier selections, such as Griddly Games' Just Add Fruits and Vegetables STEAM activity kit or Gamewright's Abandon All Artichokes card game.



The advertisement features the word "GIFTS" in large, bold, black letters, with "& decorative accessories" in smaller text below it. To the left, there are images of a tablet, a smartphone, and a magazine, all displaying the "GIFTS" logo and various gift ideas. To the right, a purple rectangular box contains the text "In These Difficult Times, Staying Informed is Essential" in white. Below these elements, a line of text reads: "For a limited time, Gifts & Decorative Accessories' digital editions are FREE and available for all to access". At the bottom, there is a purple button with the text "CLICK HERE" in white, and below that, a smaller purple box with the text "For More Information" in white.



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Pamela Brill has been published in American Baby, Babble.com, FamilyFun, Fit Pregnancy, Parents and Time Out New York Kids, and regularly writes her blog, [Talking Walnut](#), where she tracks which kids' products and toys are turning parents' and kids' heads.