

Roland Barthes' Toys

In this essay I will talk about the subtle yet massive sexism in toys. But sexism is not the end of it. Toys, despite the stereotypical belief of being a positive catalyst for creativity, seem to only ruin imagination and put it into a box which reads 'Temporary Adult World'.

All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world; they are all reduced copies of human objects, as if in the eyes of the public the child was, all told, nothing but a smaller man, a homunculus to whom must be supplied objects of his own size.



Barthes, specifically talks about French toys, saying that the adult Frenchman sees a child as a miniature version of himself and ends up designing ordinary and boring adult things in miniature sizes to call them toys. Maybe the French spoiled it for everyone. India was just fine with *Gilli Danda* and *Pithu*.

Barthes goes on to give examples of all the toys which tragically mimic the adult world.

There exist, for instance, dolls which urinate; they have an oesophagus, one gives them a bottle, they wet their nappies; soon, no doubt, milk will turn to water in their stomachs. This is meant to prepare the little girl for the causality of house-keeping, to 'condition' her to her future role as mother.

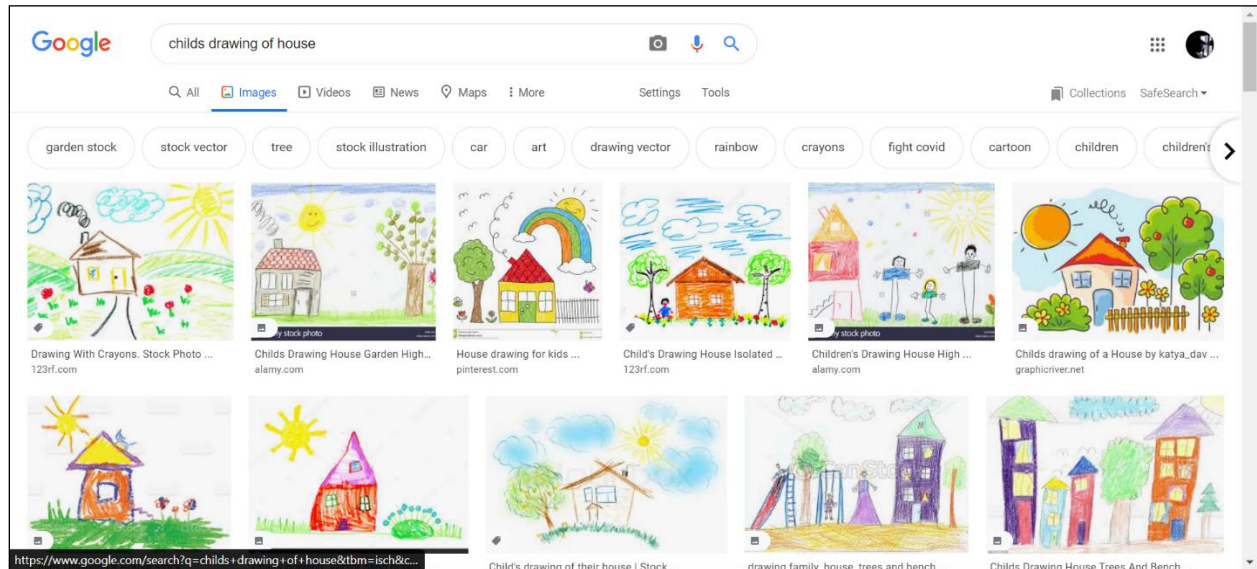


Dolls. Dolls are the epitome of EVERYTHING wrong with toys. Not only do they make girls as big as the doll itself, feel like all that the girl has to look forward to in the adult world is motherhood but it also confines playtime to mimicking motherhood, as a child. How is that in any way a catalysis for creativity? This also births the binary of how terrible toys like dolls are only for little girls in frocks who are supposed to grow into mothers, leaving no space for the slightest option of a stay-at-home dad as a possible scenario.

Barthes also deepens this narrative by mentioning how the child is always an owner, a user, and never a creator. How will creativity onset without creation? For toys like these dolls are preparing children for “actions without adventure, without wonder, without joy.”

He is turned into a little stay-at-home householder who does not even have to invent the mainsprings of adult causality; they are supplied to him readymade: he has only to help himself, he is never allowed to discover anything from start to finish.... He creates forms which walk, which roll, he creates life, not property: objects now act by themselves, they are no longer an inert and complicated material in the palm of his hand. But such toys are rather rare: French toys are usually based on imitation, they are meant to produce children who are users, not creators.

The French really just, did it, for the toy world. They killed creativity and imagination before it could grow. You may say, “But what about clay or crayons or blocks or Lego.” Well yes, they are all toys without evident and unnecessary sexism which is a very big plus but by the time one comes to that, a child is so brainwashed and stupidi-fied that all they make with these freeing toys are things from the adult world. Abstract art isn’t applauded, a drawing of a house with a tree and the sun surrounded by clouds is. Kids around the world make the same drawing with the recurring theme, what does that say about free creativity with crayons?



Give a child Lego, give them blocks, the first structure they frantically make is a tower or a house.

Which is quite a thing to ponder about, because even without toys, kids tend to play games like *ghar-ghar*. Which makes you think, “Maybe it’s not the toys.” It’s a strange loop of do toys makes kids stupid or do kids enjoy stupid games and that’s why adults make stupid toys.

Which honestly sparks another question, a question about attention and appreciation which humans hold so close to their hearts. Do children make primitive things from the adult world for attention and appreciation which they won’t get for something imaginative and creative for that is beyond the understanding of adults stuck in a brainwashed rat race.

Toys is where Sexism probably starts, or feminism, it could potentially go both ways. Toys seems to be killing creativity very efficiently. I hope you never see toys the same way because they are destroying lives.