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4 TRENDS SPOTTED AT THE 2019 NEW YORK TOY FAIR

ACROSS SEVEN FOOTBALL FIELDS-WORTH OF TOYS AT THE NEW YORK TOY FAIR THIS YEAR, WHICH TRENDS STOOD OUT AS ONES THAT WILL RAKE IN REVENUE? WE PICKED FOUR AS ONES TO WATCH...

Elmo, *PAW Patrol* pups, and even the Toys R Us giraffe showed up to the 2019 New York Toy Fair to engage with retailers, executives, and press as they hunted for the trends that will take over kids' wishlists this year. Plenty of trends that we've watched rise through the ranks over the [past couple of years](#) continued in full force at the fair, while others faded. STEAM toys remained an important educational angle for toymakers, while slime has expanded into other compounds like putty and sand. One trend that seems to have been shoved to the back of the toy box is gross-out toys and games; though there were some new offerings, like YULU's PopPop Snotz and WowWee's Fart Launcher, shelf space seems to have mostly shifted from disgusting to cutesy. Meanwhile, llamas are the new unicorns; the animal was everywhere, and we're keeping an eye on sloths and narwhals to be big hits in the near future as well.

Unboxing, a trend we called out in 2018, became bigger than ever—The Toy Association [is calling](#) it “Unboxing 2.0.” The trend has expanded into an entire YouTube-fueled genre, full of influencers, ASMR, and of course, toymakers putting a spin on surprise collectibles originally inspired by L.O.L. Surprise! and Hatchimals. In addition, several iconic toys and franchises had anniversaries this year, causing toy makers to come out with new spins on nostalgic classics. But brands also went beyond throwbacks to appeal to Millennial parents, catering to adults as much as kids. Find out more about the four trends that took over the New York Toy Fair this year:

1. AR, App-Connected, Animatronic, Etc.

Toymakers want kids' IRL play to connect to digital play. Spin Master created a new app for their Hatchimals that lets kids use codes that come with the product to expand their in-app experience. They also debuted collectible toys that come with cards that are best viewed through screens for an augmented reality experience. Several other retailers also implemented AR technology, like LEGO, whose Hidden Side kits let kids see an entire haunted world layered on to their IRL creations. Meanwhile, [Kidscreen](#) reports that Pictionary Air from Mattel asks players to draw in the air using a light up pen. An app plays back how the drawing actually turned out for unwitting artists, and users can laugh at the recording of the user attempting to create their masterpiece. Other toys also turned to digital by giving the characters used in their toys their own webisode series, like MGA Entertainment's Kingdom Builders. And the showiest toys in the tech-driven genre of Toy Fair contestants had to be the animatronic offerings, which have come a long way from the robot dogs of Millennials' childhoods. Spin Master's Juno My Baby Elephant can be taught new behaviors based on the user's actions, like tapping a certain number of times with their trunk, while Owleez are taught to fly.

2. YouTube-Inspired Everything

Last year, we saw unboxing take over the toy fair after L.O.L. Surprise and Hatchimals made every kid's holiday wishlist. The trend was an even bigger presence this year, with seemingly every brand turning their toys into a surprise experience. At Spin Master, Hatchimals got several spin-offs, including a *How to Train Your Dragon* version that will let kids hatch their very

own dragon. Other takes on the trend included Candylocks, which are dolls wrapped in long locks of hair (unwrap to reveal), Skyrocket's Blume, a doll that blooms from a pot as kids water it, and Barbie Small Surprise Reveal Mermaids. MGA Entertainment's L.O.L. Surprise! also released tons of new versions but this year, unboxing wasn't the only way retailers catered to YouTube. Also at Spin Master, Kinetic Sand, which is made for lovers of the autonomous sensory meridian response trend taking YouTube by storm, comes with a phone stand so kids can film themselves using tools to shape the sand in oddly-satisfying ways. There were also entire toy lines inspired by digital influencers, including Tyler "Ninja" Blevins (like a blue wig [fans can wear](#)), Jiffpom, and Ryan ToysReview.

3. Nostalgia Gets A New Spin

This year has plenty of significant anniversaries for the toy industry, so brands are reminding their customers of their legacy status with throwback releases. After a [strong fourth quarter](#) for the iconic toy, Mattel is celebrating Barbie's 60th birthday with new versions made for 2019, including [an astrophysicist](#) (Barbie was born during the space race after all) and [differently-abled dolls](#) that come with a wheelchair or a prosthetic leg. But Barbie's not the only nostalgic toy celebrating a big birthday. Remember the red and yellow wagon that you moved *Flintstones*-style by running along the ground beneath your seat? That's right, the Little Tikes Cozy Coupe from MGA Entertainment turned 40 this year. *Sesame Street* is also celebrating their 50-year anniversary, and life-size Elmo walked around the fair to keep the franchise top-of-mind. Meanwhile, *The Little Mermaid* has inspired [tons of toys](#) from Hasbro as the film celebrates its 30th anniversary. But not all nostalgic hits have stuck around since they debuted; instead, some are being revived. The Fashion Doodle Bear that '90s kids will remember is making a comeback, while Razor is keeping their original logo and launching scooters made for nostalgic Millennials and their kids.

4. Toys Made for Millennial Parents

Nostalgia-inducing toys are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the ways toy brands are trying to engage Millennial parents. Items that are either specifically for parents or for parents and kids to both play with were abundant at the convention center, too. For one thing, [Instagrammable](#) pool floats were everywhere, straying far from the classic white swan that took over social media feeds. There were prosecco floats, giant llama floats (as we said, llamas were everywhere), and even a *Stranger Things*-inspired Waffle Float for the show's avid fandom. Over at Razor, the trend was especially apparent. Their line has grown up a lot since the '90s and ranges from commuter scooters (they have scooter shares similar to Bird and Lime in multiple cities) to bikes made for little tykes (but that I was assured the parents always get on as well). MGA Entertainment is thinking outside of the toy box with an in-person experience meant to engage both kids and adults: a new LA-based event will invite families to engage with Little Tikes and build awareness for the toy brand.

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