





Jean-Pierre Rossie

Document on the opening of the exposition *Rêves d'Enfants*
Torino, 20 November 2010



20 novembre 2010
via Fossano 8
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RÊVES **D'ENFANTS**

crescere giocando, dal Marocco a qui

Speech at the opening of the exposition *Rêves d'Enfants (Children's Dreams)*

The exposition *Rêves d'Enfants, crescere giocando dal Marocco a qui* shows games and toys from the Anti-Atlas and the Sahara. Most toys have been created by the children themselves with natural and waste material, and a few were made by artisans. A small number come from the toy industry but they were remodeled by the children.

All this is the result of ethnographic sociocultural research from 2002 till 2009. This research takes into account tradition as well as recent changes caused by the consumer society.

When making toys these children's creativity is not limited to using various materials and multiple technical applications. It is also evident in the interpretation that girls and boys make of the natural and human world. In addition, they have a great capacity to adapt to the environment in which they grow up and to the changes that sweep their communities.

This exhibition as well as several children's workshops and activities in preschools and primary schools prove that this heritage can have a practical value on an educational, intercultural and social level. My interventions took place in Europe and Argentina, yet I am pleased to have had the opportunity to realize an exhibition and seminars in Morocco in December 2009. This happened in the Safi centre of the Fondation Orient-Occident during a cultural week on Moroccan games and toys. As the vice-consul of Morocco in Torino is present at the opening of this exhibition, I would like to use this occasion to advocate the creation of a museum of children's culture and play in Morocco.

Finally, I warmly congratulate the team that created this remarkable exhibition and I thank everyone who made it possible, especially the children who offer us the opportunity to know their dreams, experiences and creations.

Torino, 20 November 2010.

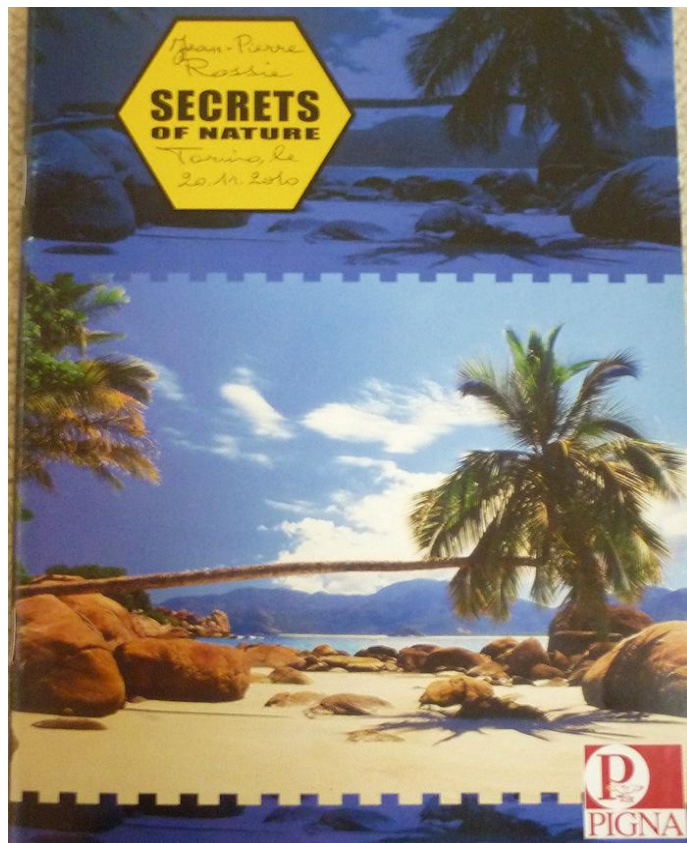
Jean-Pierre Rossie

www.sanatoypplay.org

View of two themes of the exposition:



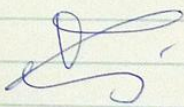
One day before the opening of the exhibition I was asked to write some notes in the student's exercise book added to the luggage one sees on the latest illustration of this document. Two photographs offer a view of this book. They are followed by a typed English translation of the French text handwritten in the exercise book.



Quelques notes sur mes
recherches concernant les
cultures ludiques sahariennes
et nord-africaines

pour toute l'information
et beaucoup de photos voir
mon site web:
www.sanatoypLAY.org

Tarino, le 20 novembre 2010.



Jean-Pierre Rossie
anthropologue socioculturel

One evening in February 1975 I arrived in southern Tunisia in the oasis El Faouar inhabited by the Ghrib, a semi-nomadic population at that time. I am welcomed as a guest of honor because my friend and colleague Gilbert J. M. Claus is already living with them in this part of the desert. A festive meal is served with couscous, fermented milk and fermented butter. I have to eat everything because you cannot refuse such local delicacies. But soon after dinner my stomach goes crazy and I run to vomit in a sand dune accompanied by the laughter of my guests. How tough the life of an anthropologist can be!

I am visiting this population to study how parents, family members and the community at large care for children, how they try to make from this little being an adult woman or man who can live among them. As the children get used to my presence, I can observe and learn many things about their lives. I'm the apprentice and they are the masters.

Once back in Belgium after spending three months in the Tunisian Sahara, I look at the notes and photos I made and become aware that the study of the Ghrib children's games and toys offers me a royal road not only to obtain information but also to be accepted into their world. It was then that I decided to dedicate myself to the detailed study of their games and toys during the fall of 1975 and spring of 1977.

A 14-year period separates this adventure of field research from a new period of research in Morocco, which lasts until today. During this period in Belgium and next to my work in a social center for immigrants in my hometown Ghent, I read books and articles on North Africa and the Sahara and analyzed a large collection of toys from these regions in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris to deepen my knowledge.

In February 1992 I could do fieldwork again. First in Marrakech for a short time and then in Kenitra on the Atlantic coast where I went because I was offered at a camping in Marrakech to become an extra in a movie shot in the high dunes near Kenitra. Later I moved to several locations in the interior of Morocco.

Traveling by bus, bicycle and by car I enjoyed the hospitality of several families and had the opportunity to make contact with their children who allowed me to discover their games and construction of toys with natural and waste material.

In 2002 I chose to settle in Sidi Ifni, a small coastal town about 180 km from Agadir in the direction of the Sahara desert and at the foot of the Anti-Atlas. There I met Khalija Jariaa, a woman from a village near Tiznit, and Boubaker

Daoumani, a teacher in the primary school of the mountain village Lahfart near Sidi Ifni, who quickly became my friends.

It is with their collaboration that I could study children's games in the Anti-Atlas and in two locations in the Sahara (Tan-Tan and Bir Gandouz Jdid). The toys donated to the Centro per la Cultura Ludica of the city of Torino and shown in the exhibition *Rêves d'Enfants : crescere giocando, dal Marocco a qui* have been created mostly by children of these regions. The photos that accompany this gift of toys were usually taken by me, several pictures of children and toys of the Anti-Atlas are from Khalija Jariaa and some from Boubaker Daoumani.

In addition to the scientific analysis that takes into account tradition as well as recent changes, my research on Saharan and North African games and toys can undoubtedly have a pragmatic purpose. So I used this important heritage for educational, intercultural and social activities in different European countries. Recently I could also do this in the Safi center of the Fondation Orient-Occident in Morocco in December 2009 and in educational institutions in three cities in Argentina in October-November 2010.

Finally, I warmly congratulate the team who made this remarkable exhibition, and I thank everyone who made it possible.

