



1



2

- 1 Spielfigur, Gans, 1960, Entwurf: Antonio Vitali, Donation: Antonio Vitali. Abbildung: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK.
- 2 Spielfigur, Kleine Wippente, 1946, Entwurf: Antonio Vitali, Donation: Antonio Vitali. Abbildung: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK.

At first, Antonio Vitali (1909–2008) carved wooden toys for his own children, but then the trained sculptor decided to go into business on his own, crafting highly simplified, elegant animal forms in his workshop. Distributed internationally, the toys stood out from their conventional counterparts by virtue of their pared-down design and sculptural quality.

After training as a sculptor in Zurich and Paris, Antonio Vitali became a father at the young age of twenty-three and then, shortly after the birth of his second child, a widower. During these years of crisis, he eked out a living as a photojournalist, but then war broke out. Vitali went into active duty, married again, and by 1942 had four children. Because money was always tight, he made his own furniture for the family and carved simple wooden animals as toys for his children. Watching them at play, he realized that rather than needing naturalistic depictions they were capable of seeing animals or other objects in randomly shaped pieces of scrap wood. This experience, as well as the influence of Rudolf Steiner's

anthroposophy, encouraged him to pursue a path toward formal abstraction. He opened his own workshop in 1944. Johannes Itten exhibited Vitali's toys at the Kunstgewerbemuseum Zürich in 1951. Max Bill described them in his book *Form*: "This toy roe-deer is so admirably delineated that it is really a perfect little piece of sculpture. The graining of the wood emphasizes its formal expression, which is not only aesthetically right but also adapted to the size of a child's hand." Vitali toys also made a name for themselves in the United States. To meet the growing demand, Vitali tried using carving machines. However, as simple as the sculptural forms may appear, they could not be produced in the same high quality by machine and had to be individually hand-finished by someone with the requisite skill. (Renate Menzi)

Spielfigur, Fuchs, 1944
Entwurf: Antonio Vitali
Produktion: Creative Playthings, New York City, US
Herstellung: Werkstätte Antonio Vitali, Thalwil / Sornico, CH
Material/Technik: Palisander
6 × 26 × 3,5 cm

Donation: Antonio Vitali
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK

<https://www.eguide.ch/en/objekt/fuchs-6/>