

OF A KIND

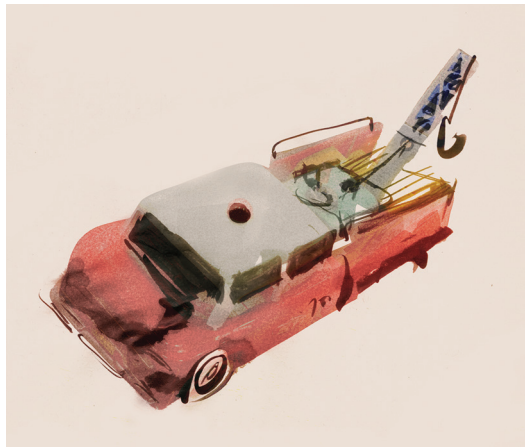
Paul Smith's
vintage toys

THE BRITISH DESIGNER Paul Smith, 72, known for his dandyish verve in mixing classic tailoring with outrageous color and pattern (he dressed Chris Hemsworth and Liam Neeson for the new “Men in Black,” in theaters this June), opened his first Tokyo store in 1984. Visiting the city back then, he discovered troves of old-fashioned toys in secondhand stores and was instantly captivated by their jaunty oddness. His first purchase — he made 10 that day — was a bow-tied ceramic pig dressed like a chef and holding a frying pan. Eventually, people caught on to his penchant for curios, and many of the 200 or so pieces now displayed in his Covent Garden office in London were given to him as gifts, including several from Apple’s chief design officer and fellow British knight, Jony Ive, a longtime friend. “Having them in my office reminds me of the movie ‘Toy Story;’” says Smith. “When we close up at night, I imagine them coming to life.” — John Wogan

Illustrations by Aurore de La Morinerie



Ceramic pig, 1950s. “This was the first toy I bought in Japan in the early 1980s. It most likely was an advertisement for some kind of food-related brand.”



Tin tow truck, 1970s. “I’ve used this in a window display in the Covent Garden store, with a beautiful watch hanging from the hook.”



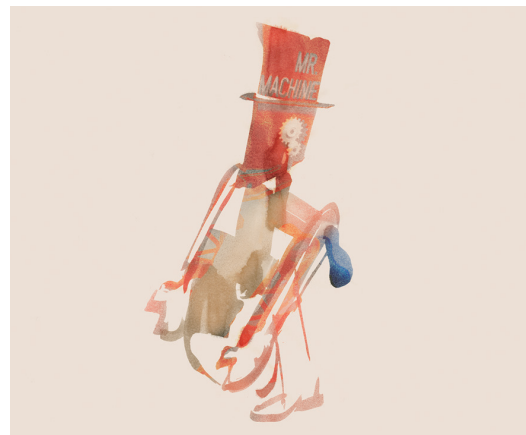
Mickey Mouse plastic windup robot, 1970s. “It’s made out of clear plastic, so you can see the mechanical aspect of it, and how it’s able to move and walk.”



Metal prop-engine passenger plane, 1950s. “Jony Ive also gave me this one. The ‘OAL’ on its wing stands for the fictional Overseas Air Lines.”



Metal submarine, early 1900s. “This one was a present from Jony Ive of Apple, for a recent birthday. It’s from the German toy company Bing, and unlike the other toys in my collection, which are light, this one is quite substantial.”



Mr. Machine metal and plastic robot, manufactured by Ideal Toy Company in 1960: “This was wonderful because you could take him apart and put him back together. You can’t do that with toys now, because the world is obsessed with safety. Those little pieces would be considered choking hazards.”